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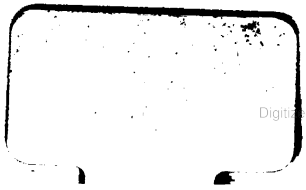

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THE TRUTH

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The Truth

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By

CLYDE FITCH

NEW YORK
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TO

MARIE TEMPEST

WITH GRATEFUL ADMIRATION FOR

HER TRIUMPHANT BECKY ON

APRIL 6, 1907

C. F.

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THE TRUTH

ACT I. AT THE WARDERS', NEW YORK
Thursday Afternoon.

ACT II. AT THE WARDERS'.
Saturday Afternoon, just after lunch.

ACT III. AT STEPHEN ROLAND'S, BALTIMORE.
Saturday Night.

ACT IV. AT STEPHEN ROLAND'S.
Monday Morning.

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THE PERSONS IN THE PLAY

WARDER.

ROLAND.

LINDON.

SERVANT AT THE WARDERS'.

BECKY WARDER.

EVE LINDON.

LAURA FRASER.

MRS. GENEVIEVE CRESPIGNY.

MESSENGER BOY.

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Produced in Cleveland, Ohio, October, 1906, and later played at The Criterion and Lyceum Theatres, New York, with the following cast: —

Warder	William J. Kelly
*Roland	J. E. Dodson
Lindon	George Spink
Servant at the Warders'	Hodgson Taylor
Becky Warder	Clara Bloodgood
Eve Lindon	Mrs. Sam Sothern
Laura Fraser	Elene Fraser
Mrs. Genevieve Crespigny	Zelda Sears
Messenger Boy	Frederick Harrison

* Played in New York by William B. Mack, and also by John Emerson.

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Produced at the Comedy Theatre, London, April 6, 1907, with the following cast:—

Warder	Allan Aynesworth
Roland	Dion Boucicault
Lindon	Dawson Milward
Servant at the Warders'	Horton Cooper
Becky Warder	Marie Tempest
Eve Lindon	Grace Lane
Laura Fraser	Sybil Carlisle
Mrs. Genevieve Crespigny	Rosina Filippi
Messenger Boy	Donald Calthrop

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ACT I

At MRS. WARDER'S. *An extremely attractive room, in the best of taste, gray walls with dull soft green mouldings, old French chintz curtains, furniture painted to match the walls and covered with the same chintz. Some old colored engravings are on the mantel shelf and a couple of eighteenth-century French portraits on the wall. On the Left is a mantel, and near it a large writing table against the back of a low sofa which faces the audience; on the table a telephone; an arm-chair and a small table on the Left; a Baby Grand piano in the upper left corner of the room. Some consols and tables in the room; four windows at the back, through which one sees the*

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park. Doors, Right and Left; books, photographs, flowers, etc., on the tables and consols.

A smart, good-looking man-servant, ~~enters,~~ shows in MRS. LINDON *and* LAURA FRASER. *The former is a handsome, nervous, overstrung woman of about thirty-four, very fashionably dressed;* MISS FRASER, *on the contrary, a matter-of-fact, rather commonplace type of good humor — wholesomeness united to a kind sense of humor.* MRS. LINDON *is the sort of woman warranted to put any one on edge in the course of a few hours' consecutive association, while friction with* MISS FRASER *is equally certain to smooth down the raw edges.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Coming in to a chair near the Centre with quick determination.*] You have no idea when Mrs. Warder will be in?

SERVANT. No, madam.

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MRS. LINDON. She was lunching out?

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

LAURA. [*With a movement to go.*] Come! She may be playing bridge and not come home for hours.

MRS. LINDON. [*Firm, though irritable.*] I will wait till half-past five. [*To* SERVANT.] If Mrs. Warder comes in before that, we will be here.

[*Nervously picks up check-book from the writing-table, looks at it but not in it, and puts it down.*

SERVANT. Very good, madam.

[*Goes out Left.*

LAURA. [*Goes to* EVE.] My dear, you must control yourself. That man, if he has half a servant's curiosity, could easily see you are excited.

MRS. LINDON. Yes, but think! She's been

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meeting Fred probably every day for the last two months, although she knew I had left his house, and always pretended to me she never saw him!

[*Sitting beside the writing-table.*

LAURA. [*Sitting Left.*] You shouldn't have come here at once. You should have waited till you had time to think over your information and calm yourself a little.

MRS. LINDON. I couldn't wait! Becky! One of my oldest friends! One of my bridesmaids!

LAURA. What!

MRS. LINDON. No, she wasn't, but she might have been; she was my next choice if any one had backed out.

LAURA. Probably Fred's appealing to her sympathy, — you know your own husband!

MRS. LINDON. [*With a disagreeable half-laugh.*]

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Yes, I know him better than she does! What I don't like is her secrecy about it after I'd made her the confidante of my trouble!

LAURA. I thought *I* was that?

MRS. LINDON. You are — another! But you mustn't forget that I have gone to Becky in hysterics and begged her to make it up for me with Fred.

LAURA. Were you perfectly frank with her?

MRS. LINDON. Perfectly! I told her the truth, and more too! I told her I loved Fred in spite of his faults — Good Heavens! if a woman had to find a *faultless* man to love! — I've asked her advice.

[*Rising nervously and going to the sofa.*

LAURA. You haven't taken it!

MRS. LINDON. That doesn't make any difference! Who ever does? [*Sitting on the sofa.*] She

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owed me her loyalty instead of flirting with Fred behind my back.

[*She opens the cigar box on the writing-table behind her and then bangs it shut.*

LAURA. Perhaps she's really trying to make peace between you in her own way!

MRS. LINDON. Does it look like it? Actually telling me yesterday she wouldn't trust herself in his presence for fear she'd lose her control and tell him what she thought of him! — and all the time she had an appointment to meet him this afternoon — in the *Eden Musée,* if you please!

LAURA. [*With comic disgust.*] Oh! Horrors!

MRS. LINDON. Yes, in the chamber of them! If that isn't compromising!

LAURA. Eve!

MRS. LINDON. And Tom Warder so nice! *Everybody* likes him!

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[*Picks up stamp box and bangs it down.*

LAURA. Including Becky. That's the point. Becky *loves* her own husband. What does she want of yours?

MRS. LINDON. She loved Tom Warder when she married him, but that was in 1903! Besides, Becky always liked having men fond of her whether she cared for them or not.

LAURA. Nonsense!

MRS. LINDON. She's what the French call an "*allumeuse*" — leads them on till they lose their heads, then she gets frightened and feels insulted!

LAURA. But you claim she *does* care for Fred!

MRS. LINDON. My dear, a magnetic man like Fred has a way of winding himself around a woman and keeping himself wound as long as he wishes! even when *she doesn't* wish, — look

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at me! I'd give anything to throw him off for good, but I can't stop being in love with him!

LAURA. [*Who has moved over to the chair beside the sofa, pats* EVE'S *hand.*] Poor old Eve! Well, when she comes, what are you going to do?

MRS. LINDON. Give her one more chance to tell me the truth! I'll ask her outright when she saw Fred last.

LAURA. But if she keeps on with her "bluff" of not seeing him, you can't tell her she lies without making a horrid scene, and what good would that do?

MRS. LINDON. Exactly! She'd never acknowledge she was lying but just go on! I may appeal to Tom Warder himself!

[*Rises and goes to mantel, looking at the fly-leaves of two books on a table which she passes.*

LAURA. No!

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MRS. LINDON. Why not? We've been friends since babies.

LAURA. You *wouldn't!*

MRS. LINDON. I don't accuse Becky of anything dreadful! Besides, it will be for his good too, as well as mine, — he knows Fred, and I'll wager anything he'll be as eager as I to stop any excess of friendship with him. [*Goes up to the window.*] Sh! here she is! and a man with her!

LAURA. [*Rises, excited, and joins her.*] Who?

MRS. LINDON. [*Going to the other window.*] I can't see.

LAURA. [*Joining her at the second window.*] Suppose it should be —

MRS. LINDON. Exactly! If she hears I'm here, she'll never let him in. [*She starts with a new idea and goes to the door Right.*] The window in

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that hall juts out; perhaps we can see the front door from there. Come quickly!

[*Tries to pull* LAURA *out Right.*

LAURA. I don't approve of what you're doing at all.

MRS. LINDON. Oh, come!

[*They go out and close the door behind them.*

[*The* SERVANT *shows in* BECKY *and* LINDON, *Left.* BECKY *is a pretty, charming, volatile young woman, sprightly, vivacious, lovable. She is dressed ultra smartly, and in the best of taste.* LINDON *is dapper, rather good-looking, though not particularly strong in character, and full of a certain personal charm. He also wears very fashionable clothes. He is a man whose chief aim in life is to amuse himself.*

SERVANT. Mrs. Lindon and Miss Fraser were

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waiting to see you, madam; they must have gone.

BECKY. [*With a humorous raising of the eyebrows and a look to* LINDON.] Oh! — I'm so sorry!

[*The* SERVANT *goes out.*

LINDON. Gee! what a narrow escape.

LAURA. [*Off stage Right, pleading loudly.*] Eve! Eve!! Come!!!

MRS. LINDON. [*Off stage Right, loudly.*] I will not. I will run my own affairs my own way.

BECKY. [*Who has heard this, with an amused, mischievous expression.*] They are there! Do you suppose they saw you?

[*They lower their voices slightly.*

LINDON. Well, — Eve can see through most things, but not through the walls! Good-by.

[*He starts to hurry out, but* BECKY *stops him.*

BECKY. You must come back! That's what I

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brought you home with me to-day for — to talk about Eve. This estrangement has gone on long enough. I've come to the conclusion you're as much to blame as she is, — or more.

LINDON. I like *that* from *you!*

BECKY. I mean it, and if she wants you back, you've got to go.

LINDON. Well, let me get a cocktail first.

BECKY. I'm serious.

LINDON. So'll I be if Eve comes in and catches me.

[*Going.*

BECKY. [*Going with him.*] I'll let you out — but I expect you here again in half an hour. Do you understand? [*They go out Left. Off stage.*] You're to come back at six.

LINDON. [*Off stage, at a distance.*] All right.

[EVE *comes in excitedly from the Right.*

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MRS. LINDON. I think it is Fred! Watch from the window! I'll stay here in case Becky comes in. [*She comes to the writing-table.*] I'd like to scratch her eyes out!

[LAURA *comes in and goes to right of the sofa.*

LAURA. It *was* Fred.

MRS. LINDON. [*Gives a tigerish, half-controlled, hushed cry of rage.*] The *wretched little beast!*

[BECKY *comes in with a start of surprise. She beams.*

BECKY. My dears! What a pleasant surprise! Why didn't Jenks tell me? Where in the world did you drop from? Laura, darling!

[*She kisses* LAURA, *who is very unresponsive, having pressed* MRS. LINDON'S *hand as she passed her.*

MRS. LINDON. We heard you come in, — we thought *with* some one, — and as I'm rather upset,

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we went in there till you should be alone. If you are busy, don't let us interrupt.

[BECKY *shows that she is relieved when she hears they don't know* FRED *was there.*

BECKY. O dear, no, I'm not busy. I came home alone, — you must have heard me talking with the servant. I've been playing bridge since luncheon.

[BECKY *and* LAURA *sit on the sofa.*

MRS. LINDON. Where?

BECKY. Clara Ford's, our usual four.

[LAURA *and* EVE *exchange glances.*

MRS. LINDON. Why! I saw her lunching at Sherry's.

BECKY. [*Quickly, after only a second's hesitation.*] Yes, she couldn't play to-day, but it was her turn at her house, so we went all the same — and — er — er — Belle Prescott took her place.

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[*Another surreptitious look passes between* LAURA *and* MRS. LINDON.

LAURA. Did you win?

BECKY. Yes, ~~a hundred and fifty~~!

LAURA. ~~A hundred and fifty? Good~~!

MRS. LINDON. [*Who has seated herself in the chair beside the sofa.*] Becky, Laura knows all my troubles; she's the bosom I weep them out on.

BECKY. Oh, come, I've gathered a few dewey diamonds off my laces! Well, how is Fred behaving? Has he shown any sign yet?

MRS. LINDON. Not one. I thought perhaps you'd have some news.

BECKY. [*Looking away.*] I? How should I have?

[*Leans over and smooths her skirt.* MRS. LINDON *exchanges a look with* LAURA.

MRS. LINDON. You said two days ago for me

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to keep silent and wait, and Fred would make an advance.

BECKY. And so he will, I'm sure! unless you do what you threatened. [*To* LAURA.] I tell Eve if she starts a suit for separation or does anything of that sort publicly, Fred may be furious and accept the situation, no matter how much of a bluff it might be on Eve's part.

LAURA. Very likely.

MRS. LINDON. I thought perhaps you meant to see Fred and have a talk with him?

BECKY. No! [MRS. LINDON *and* LAURA *exchange glances, as* BECKY, *rising, rings bell Right.*] What good would that do? To have the reconciliation mean anything it must be of his own volition. He must come for you, Eve, because he misses you, because he wants you back. [MRS. LINDON *joins* LAURA *on the sofa and talks in a*

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loud and excited whisper to her as to BECKY'S *very evident prevarication.* SERVANT *enters Right;* BECKY *speaks to him aside, amusedly watching them, and then comes above table. As she comes back.*] Well?

MRS. LINDON. I believe there's another woman in it!

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] I knew she was jealous! [*To* MRS. LINDON.] That's just the sort of thing that has made quarrels all along between you and Fred.

[*She comes to her.*

MRS. LINDON. Well, if you knew all I've had to forgive Fred, and all I have forgiven, you'd realize I had good reason always for my share of the quarrels.

BECKY. Listen to me, Eve. You're a luckier woman than you know!

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MRS. LINDON. [*Startled.*] How do you mean?

[LAURA *puts her hand on* EVE'S *shoulder to calm her.*

BECKY. Because, instead of having the forgiveness always on his side, you have the blessed privilege of doing the forgiveness yourself. [MRS. LINDON *gives a falsetto snort.*] You may smile if you like —

MRS. LINDON. [*Interrupting.*] Oh, no, thank you. I don't feel at all like smiling!

BECKY. Well, honestly, I envy you. [*Takes* EVE'S *hands in hers.* MRS. LINDON *looks once at* LAURA *questioningly, and back again quickly to* BECKY.] You know I love Tom with my whole heart — and it's a big heart for a little woman — and yet I keep him forgiving me — forgiving me something or other all the time. I'd be afraid his forgiveness would wear out, only it's in his

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soul instead of his body, and if our bodies wear out, our souls *don't* — do they? Already at the very beginning of our life together I owe him more dear forgiveness than I can ever repay, and believe me, Eve, such a debt would be unbearable for a woman unless she *adored* her husband.

MRS. LINDON. You've too much sentiment — I'm practical.

BECKY. [*Sitting down in the chair at Centre.*] Does being practical give you one-half the happiness my "sentiment" gives me?

MRS. LINDON. ~~Nonsense! My sympathies~~ are ~~with the one who has~~ the forgiving to do.

BECKY. You ~~mean~~, like all selfish people, you ~~sympathize with yourself~~, so you'll never be happy, even if you get Fred back.

MRS. LINDON. [*Startled, angry.*] *If?* What do you mean by that?

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[*Looks at* BECKY, *then at* LAURA, *sharply, then back at* BECKY.

BECKY. [*Smiling.*] Say *when* instead! *when* you get Fred back. Trust me, teach yourself to be grateful that it is *you* who have to forgive, and not the other way round.

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises, facing her, almost triumphantly, fully persuaded that* BECKY *is in the wrong.*] I knew when I came here you'd make excuses for him.

BECKY. [*Smiling.*] You've misunderstood me. I'm *trying* to make them for you.

MRS. LINDON. Thank you. *You* need excuses more than I do.

LAURA. [*Rises, alarmed.*] Eve!

MRS. LINDON. I am perfectly well aware that I made a very serious mistake in coming to *you* of all women!

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BECKY. [*Rises.*] In that case I think it best to consider the matter closed between us.

MRS. LINDON. You can think what you please, but I have no such intention!

LAURA. Eve!

[*She sits again on the sofa.*

Really Becky has shown herself reasonable and kind, and you've said enough to-day. We'd better go.

BECKY. I should have to ask you to excuse me in any case, as I have an engagement in a few minutes. I must change my dress.

[MRS. LINDON *looks meaningly at* LAURA.

MRS. LINDON. [*To* BECKY.] I intend to have the whole thing out now!

[WARDER *enters left.*

[WARDER *is a strong and sensible, unsuspicious man,—no nerves and no "temperament," noth-*

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ing subtle about him; he is straightforward and lovable.

WARDER. Oh, excuse me!

BECKY. No, come in, Tom; it's Laura and Mrs. Lindon.

[LAURA *and* MRS. LINDON *say "How do you do," as* WARDER *comes into the room. He greets them in turn.* BECKY *writes in pencil on a sheet of paper on the desk.*

TOM. I wanted to ask Becky if she wished to go to a theatre to-night.

BECKY. Yes, I should like to. [*She indicates to* TOM *that she wants* EVE *and* LAURA *to go, and having finished writing, comes to him.*] ~~I'm sorry,~~ but you really ~~must excuse me.~~ [*Slipping into* WARDER'S *hand the note she had secretly written.*] Mrs. Lindon and Laura *are going.* What are *you* going to do now?

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[MRS. LINDON *looks again meaningly at* LAURA.

WARDER. I thought I'd go round to the club till dinner.

BECKY. [*Relieved.*] That's right. I shall be engaged till half-past six, — er — Mrs. Clayton is coming to see me about the Golf Club at Roslyn — and — lots of things. You needn't hurry back.

[*She gives him an affectionate little squeeze of the arm and goes out Right. He looks down at the paper slyly and reads it.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises and goes to* TOM.] Tom, if you've nothing in particular on at the club, would you give me half an hour?

LAURA. [*Rises and goes to* EVE.] Eve, you haven't the time yourself; you must come with me.

WARDER. [*Suppressing a smile as he finishes*

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reading the note, he is a little embarrassed.] Well — really — Eve — I don't know, — I'll tell you how it is —

MRS. LINDON. Oh, I don't mean here! I know Becky wrote you a note telling you not to let me stay, didn't she?

WARDER. [*Laughing.*] She did — you see, she has an engagement. [*Reading from the paper, good-naturedly.*] "Get rid of Eve, I want the room."

MRS. LINDON. At six o'clock.

[*Glances meaningly at* LAURA.

WARDER. [*Casually.*] Is it?

MRS. LINDON. To see *Fred* in!

LAURA. Eve! be sensible!

WARDER. No, it's for Mrs. Clayton about Roslyn.

MRS. LINDON. Then why must she be rid of

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me? Georgia Clayton and I are the best of friends, and I have as much to do with Roslyn as Becky.

WARDER. [*Still pleasantly.*] I suppose Beck has a good reason, if she cared to tell us.

MRS. LINDON. I *know* Becky has an appointment *here*, at *six*, with Fred.

LAURA. You don't *know* it, Eve!

MRS. LINDON. I *do*.

WARDER. [*Still pleasantly.*] In any case that is Becky's and Fred's business, isn't it?

MRS. LINDON. You *know* Fred!

WARDER. Yes!

MRS. LINDON. Well?

WARDER. You don't want my opinion of Fred, at this late day! I also know Becky!

MRS. LINDON. Becky and Fred meet every single day.

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LAURA. [*Interpolates.*] She *thinks* so.

WARDER. What are you talking about?

MRS. LINDON. What I *know!* And if you'll wait here with me a few minutes now, in spite of what Becky said, you'll see *Fred* and not Mrs. Clayton arrive.

WARDER. If your husband is really coming, it was probably to spare you that Becky spoke of Mrs. Clayton, and I shouldn't think of embarrassing her by waiting.

MRS. LINDON. [*Disagreeably, irritatingly.*] Oh, you don't mind, then?

WARDER. Almost any man, my dear Eve, would mind your husband meeting his wife every day! I only think you've been misinformed, or only half informed, that's all.

MRS. LINDON. You are aware that Fred and I have been separated for two months?

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WARDER. Yes, Becky told me.

LAURA. [*Looking at her watch.*] It's almost six now. Come, Eve.

WARDER. [*Going toward the door, Left.*] Yes, I'm afraid I must ask you —

[*Rings electric bell on wall beside the door.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Going to him.*] Tom, for the sake of our boy and girl friendship, walk home with me, and let me speak plainly.

LAURA. [*On the other side of* WARDER.] Mr. Warder, please don't go.

MRS. LINDON. [*To* LAURA, *angry.*] What do you mean? [*To* WARDER, *pleadingly.*] I've no other man in the world to go to; I need advice. Won't you give me yours?

WARDER. [*Looks at her a moment, hesitates, then says.*] My advice? Of course, if you wish that. [*The* SERVANT *appears in the doorway in*

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answer to the bell. To SERVANT.] My hat and coat — and say to Mrs. Warder I'm walking home with Mrs. Lindon.

[*He goes out Left.*

SERVANT. Yes, sir.

[*Follows him out.*

[LAURA *looks significantly at* MRS. LINDON.

LAURA. If you keep on, there soon won't be a soul left in New York whose advice you haven't asked and not taken!

MRS. LINDON. Well, it's my *own trouble;* I can do what I like with it. What are *you* going to do now?

[*She sits in the armchair at the Left.*

LAURA. [*Going to her.*] Don't tell him all you think you know about Becky.

MRS. LINDON. *Think!*

LAURA. It will be a very great mistake.

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MRS. LINDON. Laura, I'll tell you the truth; I've had Fred watched by private detectives for over a month, and I have a list of dates and places of their meetings to more than prove what I say.

LAURA. How dreadful of you!

MRS. LINDON. Oh, wait till you get a husband, and then you'll sympathize more with a woman who is trying to keep one!

LAURA. But these places where they meet?

MRS. LINDON. Are respectable so far as I know. But *daily* meetings my dear, ***daily!***

LAURA. And you'll tell Mr. Warder?

MRS. LINDON. I don't know yet how much I shall tell. What are you going to do now?

LAURA. Wait till to-morrow! Give yourself time to recover, to consider.

MRS. LINDON. [*Simply repeats.*] What are you going to do now?

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LAURA. [*Deliberately crosses to the chair at Centre and sits.*] Stay and see Becky.

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises, delighted.*] Oh, do! Stay till Fred comes, and catch her!

LAURA. No, no! I've finished with this now. I don't sympathize with what you're going to do.

WARDER. [*With hat and coat, in the doorway Left.*] Ready?

MRS. LINDON. Yes.

WARDER. Good-by, Laura.

LAURA. Good-by. [MRS. LINDON *goes out Left with* WARDER. *After the outside door is heard to close* BECKY *comes into the room hurriedly. She stops suddenly on seeing* LAURA, *turns and tries to steal out. Just as she gets to the door,* LAURA *catches her.*] Becky!

[BECKY *turns and their eyes meet.* BECKY *laughs, realizing she is caught.*

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BECKY. Oh, you didn't go with them?

LAURA. No!

BECKY. Had enough of Eve to-day?

LAURA. Not enough of you.

BECKY. [*Sings instead of speaks.*] "Thank you!"

[*She puts her arm around* LAURA, *and they sit on the sofa.*

LAURA. Becky, why won't you be frank with Eve?

BECKY. I was.

LAURA. No, you didn't tell the truth about seeing Fred.

BECKY. Oh, that!

LAURA. Yes, that!

BECKY. I may have seen him once or twice, that's all.

LAURA. Exactly what Eve says — you don't tell the truth!

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BECKY. It's false! I never told a malicious lie in my life. I never told a fib that hurt any one but myself!

LAURA. Tell Eve the truth. Make her have confidence in you. She says if you cross the ferry to Jersey City, you say you've been abroad.

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Well, so I *have!* Laura! I'm doing my best to make Eve happy. I can't do any more than my best, and if I do it at all, I must do it my own way!

LAURA. You've seen Fred to-day.

BECKY. No, I haven't.

LAURA. Becky! He came home with you just now!

BECKY. What makes you think so?

LAURA. I saw his back on the steps with you.

BECKY. Oh, I see — spying on me? Well, you made a mistake in the back.

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LAURA. I know it was Fred Lindon.

BECKY. And I know it wasn't.

LAURA. You're not seeing him every day?

BECKY. Certainly not! But what affair is it of yours, if I do?

LAURA. We're all friends, and you're making Eve wildly jealous.

BECKY. That is entirely her own fault, not mine.

[*The* SERVANT *enters Left with a bill on a small silver tray.*

SERVANT. Pardon me, madam, a man with a box and a bill to collect.

BECKY. [*Taking bill.*] A bandbox?

[*She opens bill.*

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

BECKY. [*To* LAURA.] Oh, my dear, such a duck of a hat! And only sixty-five dollars. I

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saw it on my way here and couldn't resist buying. Are hats a passion with you?

LAURA. [*Uninterested.*] Yes, rather.

BECKY. I told them to send it C.O.D., but I didn't suppose it would come till to-morrow and I haven't a cent!

LAURA. I thought you said you won a hundred and fifty at bridge?

BECKY. No, no, my dear, you misunderstood me, I lost. [*To* SERVANT.] Tell the man if he can't leave the box, to take it back and call later; say Mrs. Warder is out.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*Goes out with the bill, Left.*

LAURA. You said you *won* at bridge!

BECKY. Oh, you tedious person! You hang on to anything like a terrier, don't you! I said I won because I didn't want Eve to think I'd lost;

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I never can bear to own up I've lost anything before Eve. [*Laughs, pulls* LAURA *by the arm.*] Good-by!

LAURA. I won't go yet.

BECKY. [*Urging her.*] You must. I have an engagement.

LAURA. *With Fred Lindon!*

BECKY. It is not. [SERVANT *enters and announces* "MR. LINDON." LINDON *follows in. He is surprised to see* LAURA, *but instantly covers his surprise. Going to* LINDON, *quickly.*] Oh, what a surprise!

LINDON. Surprise? Am I early?

BECKY. [*Indicating* LAURA.] Sh! Yes, surprise. [LINDON *sees* LAURA *and makes an amused grimace.*] But I can only give you a very few minutes. I have an engagement, haven't I, Laura?

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[*As they shake hands.*

LINDON. Oh, hello, Laura!

LAURA. [*Very dryly.*] How d'you do, Fred?

LINDON. How's Eve?

LAURA. [*Embarrassed.*] Very well — at least not very — yes, she is of course very well! She's just left here.

[*She adds this pointedly.*

LINDON. Oh! sorry I missed her! Give her my regards when you see her, and say I'm glad she's well.

[*He goes to the piano, sits on the bench, and plays.*

LAURA. [*Rises indignant.*] I shall do nothing of the kind.

[*She starts to leave the room.* LINDON *runs what he is playing into "Good-by, little girl, Good-by."*

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BECKY. [*Offering her hand.*] Good-by.

LAURA. [*Pretends not to see* BECKY'S *hand.*] Good-by.

[*She goes out Left.*

BECKY. [*Going to the piano.*] *They both saw you come back with me!*

LINDON. [*Still playing, improvising. Laughing.*] No! Did they?

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Yes, but it's no laughing matter! Eve is jealous.

LINDON. [*Stops playing.*] What right has she? Did she expect me to sit alone in the drawing-room for two months straining my ears to hear her ring the front door bell?

[*He continues playing.*

BECKY. They know we've been meeting every day, — at least they think so. *Have* we?

LINDON. [*Still playing.*] No!

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BECKY. Yes, we have! Haven't we?

LINDON. [*Stops playing.*] Well, yes, if you want the truth.

BECKY. [*Goes to sofa and sits.*] There's no use telling a story about it. I've nothing to be ashamed of, — I did it with the best of motives.

LINDON. [*Goes to* BECKY.] Oh, don't spoil it all, Becky, with motives!

[*He leans over the arm of the sofa to talk to her.*

BECKY. [*Laughs.*] You know Eve mustn't be jealous of me!

LINDON. [*Earnestly.*] Now you're not going to let her break up our little —

BECKY. [*Interrupting.*] Fred, how much do you like me?

LINDON. [*Smiling.*] I daren't tell you!

BECKY. No, I mean *really!*

LINDON. So do I!

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BECKY. I believe you are fond of me.

LINDON. I am!

BECKY. And I like you to be.

LINDON. [*Placing his hand on hers on the sofa's arm.*] Because?

BECKY. [*Slowly drawing her hand from his.*] I like men to like me, even though it really means nothing.

LINDON. Nothing?

[*Rather chagrined.*

BECKY. [*Amused.*] I like it for myself, and besides I think it's a compliment to Tom!

LINDON. [*Mockingly.*] Oh! Oh! I say! Becky!

[*He moves to the chair ~~Right~~ L. beside* BECKY *and drawing it nearer sits facing her.*

BECKY. But with you there was a special reason.

LINDON. [*Is encouraged. Draws a little nearer to her.*] Yes?

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BECKY. Of course you have perfectly understood why I've seen so much of you.

LINDON. You've been my friend.

BECKY. I've sympathized with you.

LINDON. You've been the only real glimpse of happiness I've had for months in my life.

BECKY. Don't be rhetorical! no man sounds sincere, when he talks pictures. I'll tell you why I wanted you to come back this afternoon.

LINDON. [*Taking her two hands.*] To make me happy!

BECKY. [*Pulling her hands away, and patting his half seriously.*] Yes, [*He leans over toward her.*] by making you realize it's time you went to Eve and asked her to come back.

LINDON. [*Sinking back in his chair.*] Nonsense; Eve's made a row and frightened you.

BECKY. How frightened me? I always meant

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when I'd got you where I wanted you, to influence you to make it up with Eve. She adores you!

LINDON. She has an odd way of showing it.

[*He rises and leans against the mantel beside the sofa.*

BECKY. You don't want every woman to show her love in the same way.

LINDON. I don't want any other woman to show me she loves me in Eve's way.

BECKY. Come now, you're unfair to Eve! I'm going to sympathize with her a little. Granted that she is jealous, granted that she doesn't always control her temper! — what woman worth while does!

LINDON. [*Laughing.*] But she ought to trust me — as *you* do.

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Oh, I'm not your wife.

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I wouldn't trust you for a minute if I were married to you!

LINDON. How about Tom?

BECKY. Of course I trust Tom.

LINDON. And I trust Eve.

[*Laughing.*

BECKY. Oh! but it's not the same thing. You trust Eve because you don't care enough. I trust Tom because — well, in one little word, he is perfect and I adore him!

LINDON. Sounds boring!

BECKY. Eve's proved she loves you with a *big* love! She's proved it by forgiveness. That's the proof of a love it's not easy to get and even harder to deserve! You've got it — [*He moves toward her.*] we won't go into the deserving part! But if only half that she says and one quarter of what every one else says of you is true, you ought

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to go on your knees to her in gratitude if she is willing to take you back.

LINDON. [*Sits on the arm of sofa, half laughing.*] She will! She's left before.

BECKY. You love her, Fred?

LINDON. [*Casually.*] No, I love you!

BECKY. Nonsense! I mean really! Promise me you'll go to Eve to-morrow and ask her to come back.

LINDON. [*Slides down on to sofa.*] Not yet — give me another month!

BECKY. You'll lose her!

LINDON. No, there are certain things you can't lose — try as hard as you like!

BECKY. That isn't funny.

LINDON. She's been urging you to do this.

BECKY. Nothing of the sort! She's too proud. And she mustn't dream I've had anything to do

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with your going to her. No woman really wants to accept her happiness like a pauper at the Lady Bountiful hands of another woman. She might *think* she was grateful to me, but she wouldn't be! With a disposition like Eve's you'd have another quarrel inside a fortnight. No! Eve must think you've come to her spontaneously because you can't live without her. [*He whistles. She rises.*] You can whistle, but you'll never get another woman half so good to you as Eve! Make her think you want her back. Make *yourself* think you want her back, and you don't know how happy you'll be — first in making her happy, and second in finding you are yourself.

[*He takes hold of her hand; she draws it away quickly and sits in the armchair on the opposite side of the room.*

LINDON. What are you doing away over there?

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BECKY. Oh, I thought it was getting a little crowded on the sofa.

LINDON. And must I give up my visits with you?

BECKY. Of course.

LINDON. Oh, well, if that's the price, I don't want happiness, it costs too much!

BECKY. You won't need sympathy any more. You can write me a little note and say: "Becky, I thought I loved you, but it was only a heart being caught on the rebound. Thank you for being sensible and pitching the heart back! Thank you for seeing my real happiness was in making Eve happy."

LINDON. You know that doesn't sound like me!

BECKY. Not like your foolish *old you*, but like your sensible *new you*, who has found out you can have a woman friend without getting

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sued for damages, — which has been your usual experience, I believe!

LINDON. Becky! Don't rob the graves!

BECKY. Well, will you go to Eve and beg her to come back?

LINDON. [*Rises*] No!

BECKY. Fred! The price of my friendship is your peace with Eve!

LINDON. [*Going to* BECKY.] But if I consent, I may come to see you?

BECKY. Yes.

LINDON. Eve, my darling wife, forgive me! Come to my arms and stay there — for five minutes — consider it done! Where, to-morrow?

BECKY. The Metropolitan?

LINDON. No, let me come here to-morrow, and what time?

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BECKY. [Rises.] Four — but to say *Good-by!* [*She means it.*] The *last* visit!

LINDON. Oh! well, we won't cross that bridge till we come to it! and I'll make you a bet if you ever do send me away for good, do you know what will happen?

BECKY. [*Amused.*] No, what?

LINDON. In a day or two you'd send for me to come again after all!

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Why?

LINDON. Because you like me better than you think you do!

BECKY. [*Going to the writing-table.*] Oh, really!!

LINDON. [*Following her.*] Yes, really! and you know — though you may not acknowledge it to yourself, still you know just how strong my feeling is for you.

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BECKY. [*Turning toward him.*] But I do acknowledge it, and I am grateful and pleased to have you care for me.

[*She pulls the chair beside the table in front of her.*

LINDON. [*Pushing chair away.*] "Care for you!"

BECKY. [*Pulling chair back.*] Yes! and I want to show my appreciation by making you happy.

LINDON. Eve's jealousy has frightened you, but you'll forget it to-morrow!

BECKY. [*Really not understanding.*] How do you mean?

[*She looks at him questioningly, innocently. He looks back knowingly with a half smile, not believing her. A pause.* WARDER *comes*

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in Left. He looks from one to the other, then speaks pleasantly.

WARDER. Oh! How are you, Lindon?

LINDON. Good evening, Warder.

[*Both men stand; an awkward pause.*

BECKY. [*Sitting in the armchair Right.*] Sit down, Tom.

[*He does so on the chair by the table.* LINDON *sits on the sofa. A moment's pause.*]

LINDON. Do you come up town generally as late as this?

WARDER. Oh, no, I've been up some time.

[*Second awkward pause.*

BECKY. Did you get the theatre tickets?

WARDER. No, I forgot; I didn't go to the club. I'll telephone from here. [*Very casually.* Has Mrs. Clayton gone?

BECKY. Who?

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WARDER. Mrs. Clayton. You said —

[BECKY *interrupting.*

BECKY. Mrs. Cl—? Oh! Yes! She's gone.

[*Awkward pause.*

LINDON. Have you been to the club?

WARDER. [*Very casually.*] No, I walked back with your wife to her mother's.

[*Awkward pause.* BECKY *and* LINDON *exchange glances.*

LINDON. [*Half humorously.*] I hear Eve is looking very well.

[*Pause.*

WARDER. By the way, will you have a whiskey and soda, a cocktail or something?

BECKY. Or *tea?*

LINDON. Tea? poison to me! No, thanks, I must be getting on.

[*All rise; then, after a moment of embarrassment,* WARDER *speaks.*

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WARDER. Yes?

LINDON. I've an early, melancholy, bachelor's dinner at seven.

BECKY. It's your own fault! Think how well Eve looks in a dinner dress, and what a delightful hostess she always is.

LINDON. Yes, Eve's all right in a crowd! [*Shaking hands. To* WARDER.] Forgive my domestic affairs intruding. Mrs. Warder has been kind enough to advise me a little! Good-by!

[*Going.*

WARDER. I'm sure her advice is good. You'd better take it!

LINDON. Perhaps! — but in homeopathic doses! [*To* BECKY.] Good-by! [*To* WARDER.] Bye, Warder.

[*Laughing, he goes out Left.* WARDER *and*

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BECKY, *alone, look at each other,* — BECKY *questioningly,* WARDER *half puzzled.*

BECKY. Well! Has Eve been weeping on *your* bosom, too?

WARDER. No, I think she *scratched* it, if she did anything!

BECKY. [*Half amused, half worried.*] *How* do you mean? [*The* SERVANT *enters with a letter which he gives to* BECKY.] When did this come?

SERVANT. A little while ago, but madam gave orders not to be interrupted.

[*He goes out.* WARDER *gives* BECKY *a quick, sharp look, which, however, she doesn't notice.*

BECKY. From father! He can't want more money already!

WARDER. *You* sent him how much two days ago?

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BECKY. [*Goes above the writing-table as she opens the letter.*] *You* sent him, you generous darling, three hundred dollars. I had given him his allowance the beginning of the month.

WARDER. And gone already! Of course, he's been at the races this week! No more. Becky, — is it true you've been seeing Lindon every day lately?

BECKY. [*While she reads her letter.*] No! — yes! [*Looks up at him.*] I mean no, certainly not!

WARDER. [*Smiling.*] Which is it? or do I take my choice?

BECKY. [*With a little laugh.*] I've seen something of him. I'm sorry for him. — Father's in more trouble.

WARDER. That's an old story, and this is something new. Eve is jealous of you.

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BECKY. [*Looks up at him.*] Are you, of Fred Lindon?

WARDER. No!

BECKY. [*Goes quickly to him and kisses him and pushes him down on to the sofa.*] Bless you! You're right, and that's my answer to Eve! — Father does want more money!

WARDER. We send no more till next month, not one penny. ~~Come here!~~ [*~~He makes her sit on the arm of the sofa beside him. She puts her arm about his neck and hugs him.~~* WARDER *continues.*] You haven't seen Lindon almost daily for the past month, have you?

BECKY. No.

WARDER. You haven't met him by appointment at the Metropolitan, Eden Musée, or any such places?

BECKY. Eve's jealousy gives her the most

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ridiculous ideas! When I have been with Mr. Lindon, it has been principally to talk about Eve, and entirely with the desire to try and reconcile them.

WARDER. Grant that! But it's not true about all these appointments?

BECKY. No!

WARDER. [*With his arm about her waist.*] I believe you love me better than all the world?

BECKY. Than all the world, and every world, and all the planets put together, Mars, Saturn, and Venus. Yes. I love you *even* more than Venus!

[*Laughing and giving him another caress.*

WARDER. I have every confidence in you and your motives. But I have none in Lindon's — so I want to-day's visit to be his last, my dear.

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BECKY. [*Rising, a little uncomfortable.*] All right.

WARDER. Own up, now, hasn't he tried to make love to you?

BECKY. [*Leaning on the back of the chair, facing him.*] No!

WARDER. Not a bit?

BECKY. [*Smiling.*] Well — maybe — just a tiny bit — but not in earnest.

WARDER. [*Rising, angrily.*] I was sure of it! the damn puppy! Becky, I've heard him swear there's no such thing as a decent woman if a man goes about it in the right way!

BECKY. Oh, you men are always hard on another man whom women like.

WARDER. I know what I'm talking about *this* time, and you don't.

BECKY. [*With dignity.*] I judge by his be-

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havior to me. He may have led me to believe he likes me very much, — he ought to like me, I've been very nice to him, — and I suppose it flattered me — [*Smiling.*] it always does flatter me when men like me, — and I think one feeling I have is pride that you have a wife whom other men admire! If Mr. Lindon has made — er — respectful love to me, that's a compliment to *you.* [WARDER *laughs, sincerely amused.*] But he has *not* insulted me.

WARDER. [*Smiling.*] That's your fault. You are the kind of woman he doesn't believe exists, and he can't make up his mind just what tactics to adopt.

BECKY. He knows perfectly, unless he's deaf and blind, that my seeing him — a few times only — has been solely to reconcile him with Eve.

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WARDER. That sort of man *is* deaf and blind except to his own rotten mental suggestions. He is incapable of believing in your philanthropic motive, so let it go, dear.

BECKY. [*Places the letter on the writing-table and sits behind it.*] Eve has frightened you!

WARDER. [*Walks away.*] Not a bit; I laughed at her fears that you were fascinated by her precious worm! But I do consider that unwittingly you have been playing a dangerous and — forgive me, darling — [*Going to her.*] a very foolish game. Already some one believes you've been seeing Lindon every day. You haven't! But that doesn't make any difference! Every one will believe you have seen him twice a day in another month if you continue seeing him at all. No woman can have the "friendship" of a man like Lindon for long without — justly or unjustly

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— paying the highest price for it. [*He places his hand tenderly on her shoulder.*] You wouldn't know what the price was till the bill came in, — and then no matter how well you knew and those who love you knew you had not danced, all the same the world would make you pay the piper!

BECKY. I do your sex greater justice than you! I don't believe there's any man, no matter what he has been, whom some sincere woman can't waken to some good that is in him!

WARDER. [*Smiling.*] That's all right, but you please let Eve wake up Lindon! [*He moves away.*] Had you made any arrangements to ring a little friendly alarm on him to-morrow?

BECKY. No! And that, of course, was Eve's suggestion!

WARDER. Well, never mind so long as it's understood his visits here are at an end. You

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don't expect him to-morrow, and should he come, you won't see him, eh?

BECKY. Exactly! [*Smiling.*] When I told him to-day his visits were over, what do you think he said?

WARDER. I couldn't guess.

BECKY. He said I'd change my mind and send for him!

WARDER. And if you did, do you know what he would do?

BECKY. No, — what?

WARDER. Consider it a signal of capitulation, — and ten to one take you in his arms and kiss you!

BECKY. [*Rises.*] He wouldn't dare!

WARDER. I'm not sure, but at any rate I am serious about one thing in this discussion.

BECKY. [*Goes to him and places her hands*

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lovingly on his arms.] Our first "domestic row."

WARDER. [*Turns her about and holds her in his arms, — she leans against him.*] And last!

BECKY. Amen!

WARDER. [*Very seriously.*] And I echo the sentiment, I know, of every sane husband in New York — Lindon's attentions to a man's wife are an insult, and as your husband I won't have them.

BECKY. [*Leaving his arms, ~~pushes him playfully into a chair and~~ sits near him in the corner of the sofa.*] Well, give me my woman's last word. I still think you are unfair to him — but I love you all the same!!

WARDER. You'd better!

BECKY. I'm so afraid you'll get — not tired, but — well — too used to me!

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WARDER. Not till I find you twice the same! Now, — what about your father?

BECKY. He only wants fifty dollars, and says he must have it; let's send it.

WARDER. ~~No, that's the way it's been always.~~ Our "no" has always ended "yes," so of course he hasn't believed in it. ~~This time it must stay~~ "no."

BECKY. [*Plaintively.*] You won't send it?

WARDER. No, and you mustn't.

BECKY. Oh, I haven't got a cent. But he says he's in real trouble and he must have it.

WARDER. It's always the same thing! And we must put a stop to his inveterate, indiscriminate gambling. If we don't teach him the lesson he needs soon, before we know it he will be in real trouble that ten thousand times fifty dollars mightn't get him out of.

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BECKY. But he promises not to —

WARDER. [*Interrupting.*] My dear! He has given his word over and over again, and broken it twice as many times! If it isn't a race course, it's a bucket shop — or some cheap back door roulette table, and it's got to stop! Stop now!

BECKY. But, Tom —

WARDER. [*Interrupting.*] Now, Becky! You know how hard it is for me to refuse you.

BECKY. It's only —

WARDER. [*Interrupting.*] You must trust my judgment, and your father must learn, and a small matter of fifty dollars is a good chance to begin; it can't be so very serious! so that's ended.

BECKY. [*Half humorously, half discouragedly.*] Yes, I guess it's ended!

WARDER. Now, will you try to realize that I only want to do what's best and right?

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BECKY. [*Kisses him.*] Yes, but I can't help feeling sorry for father.

[*Smiling.*

[*The* SERVANT *enters Left with a bill and a bandbox.*

SERVANT. Beg pardon, madam, but the man has come back.

BECKY. [*Takes the bill.*] Oh, my hat! Very well, I'll ring when I'm ready. Leave the box on the chair.

SERVANT. [*Puts bandbox on the chair at Left.*] Very good, madam.

[*He goes out.*

BECKY. [*Smiling, embarrassed.*] I'm nearly as bad as father!

WARDER. Lose at Bridge to-day?

BECKY. No, I didn't play to-day, but I couldn't resist a hat, my dear, the most adorable hat!

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[WARDER *laughs "Oh, Becky."*] No, honestly! Much more beautiful than the one I bought day before yesterday! I'm ashamed, but I did order it to come home, and I haven't a penny.

WARDER. [*Teasing her.*] Send it back!

BECKY. Oh, you wouldn't be so heartless! and what would they think at the shop?

WARDER. [*Getting out his pocketbook.*] How much is it?

BECKY. [*Hesitates a moment.*] Fifty dollars!

WARDER. [*With a slight quizzing look.*] Just what your father wants.

BECKY. Yes! Give the money to father and I'll send back the bonnet.

WARDER. No, my darling. You know it isn't the money with your father, it's the principle of the thing. I've not got the money, I must write a check.

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[*He looks for the check book. She quickly gets a check book from table and hides it behind her back.*

BECKY. Your check book's upstairs.

[*She rings the bell on the desk.*

WARDER. I thought perhaps yours was here?

BECKY. No, mine's used up, as usual!

WARDER. All right.

[*He goes out Right, as the* SERVANT *enters.*

BECKY. [*Opening the bandbox.*] Send the man here, Jenks.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*He goes out, Left.*

BECKY. [*Takes out the hat and looks at it admiringly.*] What a duck! [*Heaves a great sigh and puts it back and starts to re-tie the strings, as the* MAN *enters.*] I want you to take this back to Mme. Flora, and say Mrs. Warder is extremely

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sorry, but Mr. Warder has taken a violent dislike to the hat, so she cannot have it. She will be in later to choose another.

MAN. Yes, ma'am.

[*He goes out with the bandbox, Left.* BECKY *sits down and starts to write a letter hurriedly.* WARDER *comes in with check.* BECKY *hides the letter she is writing.*

WARDER. [*Coming to the table.*] Here's the check, all but the name of the payee. Where's the bill?

BECKY. Make it out to me, and I'll endorse it.

WARDER. Why?

BECKY. O dear! [*Half worried, half smiling.*] I told you a sort of fib! The hat was only thirty-five dollars, but I wanted the extra fifteen for something else. Please don't be angry —

WARDER. [*Laughing.*] I'm not angry, though

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you know I dislike even little fibs. Why didn't you tell me if you're hard up? I'll give you this and make out another for the bonnet shop.

BECKY. No, you needn't do that; the man's gone now for the change, — I told him.

WARDER. [*Finishes the check and gives it to her.*] Becky! you're not going to send this to your father? I forbid that.

BECKY. No, no, darling! [*Takes the check.*] And now you get dressed. I'll be up in a minute. You know it always takes you twice as long as it does me when you wear a white tie! It's a long play and begins early.

WARDER. I'll bet you I'll be dressed before you start!

[*He hurries out, Right.*

BECKY. [*Rings the telephone on the desk.*] Hello! Hello, 6304–72d. [*Writes on her inter-*

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rupted letter with one hand and listens with the receiver in the other. After a moment.] Hello! 6304–72d? Is Mr. Lindon — yes, ask him to come to the 'phone and speak to 2759–38th. [*Listens as she writes.*] Hello! Is that you? Yes — yes — Oh, [*Laughs.*] don't be silly! I called you to say I am very sorry, but our engagement for to-morrow is off! O double f! No, for good! For *Good!* [*She adds very quickly.*] Good-by! [*Hangs up the receiver and writes. In a moment the telephone bell rings furiously; at first she ignores it; then she makes a grimace at it; then she takes up the receiver.*] Hello! No, Central, I wasn't cut off. No, I don't want the number back, thank you, I hung up the receiver. I can't help that! You needn't re-connect us — say the line is busy! [*Hangs up the receiver.*] Mercy! when you don't want them!! [*Rings the electric bell on*

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the desk, endorses the check, puts it in the letter, and seals the envelope. The SERVANT *enters as she addresses letter.*] I want you to take this at once and put a special delivery stamp on it. I want it to reach my father in Baltimore to-night.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

BECKY. Have you any idea whether it would be delivered there to-night or to-morrow morning?

SERVANT. One or the other, madam.

BECKY. [*Smiling.*] That I know! Make haste.

[*The* SERVANT *goes out Left, as* WARDER, *all dressed, save that his tie hangs loose, rushes in, Right. She rises quickly.*

WARDER. Who's ready first?

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Oh, you've raced! But while you're tying your tie I'll —

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WARDER. [*Interrupts.*] No, I came down purposely to get you to tie it for me!

[*He stands ready.*

BECKY. [*Ties it during the following speeches.*] You forgive me for telling you that little fib?

WARDER. Yes, if it's to be your last one.

BECKY. My *very* last.

WARDER. No more of those wicked little white lies, even, that you know you do amuse yourself with, and distress me?

BECKY. No, no! Really! I've opened the cage door and let all the little white mice fibs out for good!

WARDER. And you do love me?

BECKY. Do you want to know how much I love you?

WARDER. Yes, how much?

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BECKY. How deep is the ocean in its deepest spot?

WARDER. As deep as your love for me.

BECKY. Oh, that isn't fair! You're stealing my thunder! There! [*The tie is finished, and she pushes him playfully into the chair by the writing-table.*] One good turn deserves another. [*With her arms about his neck she slides on to his knee, like a child.*] I've let Perkins go out, and you *must* hook me up the back.

[*And both laugh gayly as he embraces her and*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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ACT II

At the Warders' early Saturday afternoon, just after lunch.

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ACT II

The same scene as Act I. BECKY *and* WARDER *are sitting on the sofa, both drinking coffee after lunch.* WARDER *puts his coffee cup on the table as the curtain rises.*

BECKY. Aren't you going to smoke, darling?

[*Putting her coffee on the table behind her.*

WARDER. Yes.

[*Getting out cigar.*

BECKY. Give it to me. [*She takes it, and cuts the tip with a gold jewelled cutter which she wears on a chain about her neck.*] For six years you've not smoked a cigar in my presence that I haven't clipped, have you?

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WARDER. No. And how about anybody else's cigars? That hasn't cut off any tips for — Lindon, I hope!

BECKY. No indeed! He only smokes cigarettes.

WARDER. [*Amused.*] Is that the only reason?

BECKY. Oh, you darling! I believe you are a little jealous of Lindon and I adore you for it.

[*Hugging and kissing him.*

WARDER. Well, you go on adoring, but I'm not a bit jealous of Lindon.

[*Rises, and lights his cigar with a match from the table behind them.*

BECKY. You're not going back to the office? It's Saturday.

WARDER. No — I think I'll have a game of racquets with Billy Weld.

BECKY. Do! You love it so. I've regretted

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their invitation to dine with them next week, Friday. I said we're going out of town.

WARDER. But we're not. We've people dining here, haven't we?

BECKY. Yes, but I think going out of town sounds so much more interesting. Besides, then they can't possibly be offended that they aren't asked here. Grace'll be consumed with curiosity, too, as to where we're going!

[*Amused.*

WARDER. But if they see us Friday?

BECKY. They'll think we haven't gone yet.

WARDER. But if Billy meets me down town Saturday morning?

BECKY. He'll think you took an early train back.

WARDER. The truth's so simple, so much easier — why not tell it?

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BECKY. Don't worry, it'll be all right. I'm sorry I told you if you're going to worry!

[*He goes to kiss her; she stops him.*

WARDER. [*Sitting beside her.*] What's up?

BECKY. I've decided I kiss you too often. I'm a shop-keeper with only one line of goods — no variety, and I'm cheapening my wares. [WARDER *laughs.*] I don't want you to feel you're getting a left-over stock of stale, shopworn kisses! I want you to feel the supply doesn't equal the demand.

[*She kisses him. The* SERVANT *enters and they move apart.*

SERVANT. Mrs. Lindon to see Mr. Warder.

BECKY. [*To* WARDER.] Eve! [*To* SERVANT.] Ask her to come in here and have a cup of coffee and a cigarette.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*Goes out.*

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BECKY. [*Beaming.*] Come to tell us of the reconciliation!

WARDER. Why she didn't let him go and be thankful! I don't see what she can love in a little outsider like Lindon!

BECKY. Thank Heaven all women don't love the same kind of a man! [*Steals a caress.*] Think what an awful fight there'd be!

SERVANT. [*Coming back.*] Mrs. Lindon sends this message — she wishes to see *Mr.* Warder.

[BECKY *and* WARDER *look at each other, surprised and amused.* BECKY *makes a grimace.*

WARDER. Very well, show Mrs. Lindon in.

SERVANT. Yes, sir.

[*Goes out.*

WARDER. More trouble!

BECKY. They've quarrelled again already! It must have been *his* fault.

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[SERVANT *shows in* MRS. LINDON *and goes out.*

MRS. LINDON. [*To* WARDER, *not noticing* BECKY.] How do you do?

WARDER. How do you do, Eve?

BECKY. How do you do, Eve! Sit down.

MRS. LINDON. I wish to see Tom for a moment, Becky.

BECKY. What for?

MRS. LINDON. I wish to see him alone.

BECKY. Why?

MRS. LINDON. That, Becky, is my affair — and *his* perhaps!

BECKY. Oh, really! I suppose I ought to become very jealous now, and do dreadful things. [*Smiles.*] But don't have me for a moment on your mind, Tom.

[*Kisses her finger, puts it to Tom's lips, he kisses it, and she goes out Right.*

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WARDER. What is it, Eve? You know I have no earthly secrets from Becky.

MRS. LINDON. It's about her secrets from you!

WARDER. Nonsense!

[*Half laughs.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Sitting in the chair by the table near Centre.*] I only hinted at things the other day — and only hinted at one-half the truth.

WARDER. [~~*Sitting on the sofa.*~~] Excuse me, Eve, but you've got hold of the wrong half. I asked Becky outright — that is our way always. She denied practically all you said.

MRS. LINDON. You can't make me believe you've lived as long as you have with Becky Roland and not found out — she lies.

WARDER. [*Rises quickly in anger.*] It's because you're a woman you dare say that to me, but you

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know I don't have to listen to you, so don't push our old friendship's claim too far.

MRS. LINDON. I said Becky and Fred met often on the sly.

WARDER. [*Sitting again.*] Which isn't true!

MRS. LINDON. No! They meet *every day!*

WARDER. Eve, I think your trouble has gone to your brain.

MRS. LINDON. [*Still quietly, but with the quiet of the crater when the volcano is alive beneath.*] I can prove to you that Becky has seen Fred every day and more than that! When we had our talk two days ago, they had agreed together that he was to go through a form of reconciliation with me for appearance' sake, and their meetings were to continue. She had an appointment with him for yesterday.

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WARDER. That I know isn't true, for she swore to me the opposite.

MRS. LINDON. Yes, you frightened her off and she broke the engagement by telephone, which made Fred perfectly furious!

WARDER. [*Rising, goes to mantel and knocks his cigar ashes into the grate; absolutely unconvinced, he continues with a cynical smile.*] And how did you obtain this decidedly intimate information?

MRS. LINDON. [*In an outburst, the volcano becoming a little active.*] From him! I knew they hadn't met for two days —

WARDER. [*Interrupting.*] How?

[*He looks up curiously.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises and turns away, a little ashamed.*] I've had Fred watched for weeks!

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WARDER. [*Astonished, rises.*] You mean you've —

[*He hesitates.*

MRS. LINDON. Yes! [*Coming to the desk, and speaking across it to him.*] I took their not meeting for a sign that after all Becky had given him up, and I had the impulse to go to him — to go back home. He turned on me like a wolf — said I'd meddled with his affairs once too often —that I'd frightened Becky into breaking off with him, that he had been on the point of making up with me for the reason I've told you, but now it was done for! I'd raised your suspicions, I'd given the whole thing away to everybody, and I could congratulate myself on having broken off his and my relations for good — forever! Oh, how could he insult me so when it was only his love I was asking for?

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[*She sinks down in the chair above the table, and buries her face in her hands and sobs.*

WARDER. [*Forgets himself and exclaims.*] But how can you — how can you still care for him after everything you've gone through? It's beyond my understanding!

[*He throws his cigar angrily into the fireplace.*

MRS. LINDON. The history of the world is full of women who love like me, but no men — I don't know why; but I suppose that's why you can't understand it. Why couldn't he realize it is for happiness not appearances I've been fighting? And now it's over, for I know when he means what he says — and he told me, like a low brute, I could go to — where you can imagine — for all he cares, or for all he'll ever live with me again.

[*Her voice fills up again.*

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WARDER. I should think if you went to the address he proposed, it would insure at least an eventual meeting!

MRS. LINDON. [*Who has not heard and does not understand.*] What?

WARDER. I beg your pardon! I made a foolish joke! Well? [*With a hearty long breath of relief.*] Now do you feel better?

MRS. LINDON. [*Feebly, not understanding.*] Better?

WARDER. Yes, now you've got it all "off your chest"? To-morrow you'll be all right and ready to forgive again. Shall I call Becky?

[*Going toward the bell beside the mantel.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises.*] You're going to accuse her before me?

WARDER. [*Stops and turns.*] Accuse her? [*Laughs.*] No — I don't believe a word you've

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told me. I'd take Becky's unspoken denial against Fred's sworn statement any day.

MRS. LINDON. [*Going to him.*] Then here's yesterday's report from the agency! — and Thursday's, and Thursday's includes the report of the telephone central who connected Becky with our house when she broke off the appointment with Fred, — that telephone girl has told us many interesting things!

WARDER. Stop! Stop this! I won't listen to you — at any rate not behind Becky's back. I'm not a jealous, suspicious woman with good reason to believe the worst. I'm a straightforward, decent man, I hope, and I know I've every reason to believe absolutely in my wife, God bless her! [*He moves away and then turns upon her.*] Why have you come and told me this, anyway?

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MRS. LINDON. [*Staggered.*] Why — why?

WARDER. [*Angry.*] Yes, why? to me of all people! I was the last person you should have told, as a matter of breeding, as a matter of tact, as a matter of the friendship you talk about.

MRS. LINDON. But that was just it!

WARDER. Do you dream what it would mean to me to shake even by a miserable tremor my confidence in my wife? But you haven't!

MRS. LINDON. I thought, and I still think, it's to your advantage to know.

WARDER. [*With a complete change of voice, from anger to the tone one adopts with a silly child.*] My dear Eve, while I don't for a minute excuse him, still I do now understand, perhaps, how even Fred Lindon must have found your ideas of devotion at times over the endurance line.

MRS. LINDON. You don't understand, — I

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thought if you knew everything, together we could separate them — could arrange something.

WARDER. Eve! believe me, there's nobody to separate in this case; there's nothing, so far as I and mine are concerned, to arrange.

[*He goes again to the bell by the mantel.*

MRS. LINDON. Who are you going to ring for?

WARDER. You know.

MRS. LINDON. [*Stopping him quickly.*] Not before me! I don't want to see her humiliated. I don't want a public revenge or triumph; that's not the feeling I have.

WARDER. What in the world do you mean? [*He rings.*] Becky will deny the —

MRS. LINDON. [*Interrupting.*] Very likely! But these proofs are incombatible, and if that's her attitude, I shall go straight from your door to the divorce court.

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[*She places the envelope of reports on the table with a blow.*

WARDER. [*Goes to her.*] You're mad! If your proofs are all right, then Becky'll not deny, she'll explain them. You forget you can only see everything red now, but I'm sane and quiet and sure [*Smiling.*], and I see things in their true colors. You must be guided by me in this. [*He takes her hand almost cruelly and speaks strongly, with the manner and voice of the man who is and means to remain master.*] Do you understand that? [*She draws her hand away as if in pain.*] I beg your pardon. I am afraid you are one of those dangerous "well-meaning" persons who do more harm than the people who are purposely malicious. You are to take no step without my sanction.

[BECKY *comes in with a certain air of bravado.*

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BECKY. Excuse me, I heard the bell and I was waiting — am I right?

WARDER. [*Goes to her.*] Come right in, dear.

BECKY. Well! has Eve thrown a bomb, or a trump card? Am I to be taken into the secret or conspiracy or what?

WARDER. [*After a second's pause, in which he thinks how to begin.*] Eve has convinced herself, and would convince me, of some very — [*He thinks for the word.*] wrong — worse than wrong things, but I prefer to be convinced of the contrary by you. And I prefer to come to you with my confidence, my conviction complete. And together we'll try to keep Eve from harming others as well as herself and Lindon — the latter seems unavoidable. [EVE *pushes her papers on the desk pointedly nearer to him. He ignores them.*] Eve says you've not been seeing Lindon often, but every day.

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BECKY. Do you want me to deny it?

WARDER. [*Indulgently.*] I want you to tell the truth.

BECKY. Of course the accusation and the idea behind it are absurd. [WARDER *turns and looks at* MRS. LINDON, *who meets his glance and then looks down at the evidence on the table, pushing the papers a little farther toward him. He does not follow her glance.* BECKY *half laughs.*] It's like a trial, isn't it? By what right does Eve —

MRS. LINDON. [*Interrupting.*] The supreme right of any married woman who cares for her husband. Shall I be more explicit?

BECKY. No, you needn't trouble! What next, Tom?

WARDER. Eve claims you had an engagement with Fred —

[*Hesitates, trying to remember the day.*

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MRS. LINDON. [*Quickly.*] Day before yesterday.

WARDER. Which you broke off over the telephone.

BECKY. How does she know that? Does she tap our wire? Merciful Heavens, Eve, you've become so morbid over your trouble your mind's diseased on the subject of Fred — and everybody else apparently.

MRS. LINDON. Ha!

WARDER. But is this true, Becky?

BECKY. [*To gain time.*] Is what true?

WARDER. About this appointment with Fred which you broke over the —

BECKY. [*Interrupting.*] Of course not!

WARDER. [*Who begins to doubt her.*] If it were, you could easily explain it, I'm sure.

[*Hoping to suggest this course to her.*

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BECKY. [*Her head lost.*] Of course — but there's nothing to explain! The whole thing's false! What do you take me for, Eve? If you think I'm a home destroyer, you've made a mistake in the bird! And what do you mean by coming into my precious home and trying to make trouble for me?

[*Sitting on the sofa, frightened and almost in tears.*

WARDER. Wait a minute, Becky, it's partly my fault.

BECKY. It is not! I know whose fault it is, and I must say that, at last, I don't blame Fred Lindon!

MRS. LINDON. Oh!

BECKY. There! I'm sorry I said that. When I'm excited like this I speak the truth straight out, no matter what happens!

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WARDER. Well really it was I who insisted on your joining us, against Eve's will. [*To* MRS. LINDON.] Your way was best. It was my man's point of view — [*To* BECKY.] and you are right, under the circumstances, no doubt, to answer as you do.

BECKY. My dear Tom, there's no other way to answer.

WARDER. [*Looks at her, then takes up the envelope containing the detective reports and holds them tightly in his hand. He comes down to* MRS. LINDON.] If you will leave us alone, I will go over the whole matter with Becky, — by ourselves will be much better.

MRS. LINDON. I need hardly tell you those papers are most valuable to me.

BECKY. [*Looking up, her curiosity aroused.*] What papers?

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[*Nobody answers her. She tries to see.*

MRS. LINDON. Will you promise me not to let them out of your hands till you put them back into mine?

WARDER. I will.

MRS. LINDON. [*As she moves to go, stops.*] You will find the entries which are of particular interest to you marked on the margin with a red cross!

WARDER. [*Satirically.*] Thank you!

[BECKY *rises and rings for the* SERVANT. MRS. LINDON *goes out.*

BECKY. [*Coming to meet* WARDER.] I think I'm a pretty good-natured woman to let Eve —

WARDER. [*Stands before* BECKY *with his hands on her shoulders, making her look straight into his eyes.*] Now be careful, dearest. You've married a man who doesn't understand a suspicious nature

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— who has every confidence in you and the deepest — a confidence that couldn't be easily disturbed; but once it was shaken, every unborn suspicion of all the past years would spring to life fullgrown and strong at their birth, and God knows if my confidence could ever come back. It never has in any of the smaller trials of it I've made in my life. So you'll be careful, won't you, dearest? I mean even in little things. My faith in you is what gives all the best light to my life, but it's a live wire — neither you nor I can afford to play with it.

[*Goes to the writing table and takes the papers out of* EVE'S *envelope.*

BECKY. Tom, you frighten me! Eve has made you jealous again. [*Goes to him and puts both arms about his neck.*] Now, my darling, I give you my word of honor I love only you and never

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have loved Fred Lindon and never could! Say you believe me!

WARDER. Haven't I always believed you?

BECKY. Ye- - - -s.

WARDER. But if I find your word of honor is broken in one thing, how can I ever trust it in another?

BECKY. Of course you can't, — but you needn't worry, because it won't be broken.

WARDER. Then, now we're alone, tell me the truth, which you didn't tell me when you said you'd not seen Lindon often.

BECKY. [*Turns away.*] It was the truth. I haven't — so very often.

WARDER. Not every day?

BECKY. [*Sits in the chair by the writing-table.*] How could I?

WARDER. Nor telephoned him Thursday, break-

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ing off an engagement *after you told me absolutely you'd parted with him for good — and had no appointment?*

BECKY. Of course not! The idea! [*But she shows she is a little worried.*] Eve Lindon never could tell the truth!

WARDER. The telephone girl must have lied too or else the statement was made out of whole cloth.

[*Throwing the envelope on the desk.*

BECKY. What statement?

WARDER. [*Sitting on sofa.*] From these detectives.

[*He begins to look through the papers.*

BECKY. Detectives! [*Stunned.*] What detectives?

[*Picks up envelope and looks at it, puts it back on desk.*

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WARDER. Eve's, who have shadowed her husband for the past two months.

BECKY. [*Thoroughly alarmed.*] You don't mean —

WARDER. [*Interrupts, not hearing what* BECKY *says; his thoughts on the papers which he is reading, he speaks very quietly.*] These certainly do make out a case of daily meetings for you two.

BECKY. It's not true!

WARDER. ~~Though not so very many~~ *here.*

[*Turning over a fresh paper.*

BECKY. [*Rises, gets above desk.*] ~~All! All~~ the meetings there have been, — practically. This is simply awful! Eve is capable of making the most terrific scandal for nothing. Don't let her, Tom, will you? Tear those things up!

WARDER. [*Smiling indulgently, not taking her seriously.*] Becky!

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BECKY. [*Leaning over the table, stretches out her hand toward him.*] Well, let me! Let me take them from you without your noticing till it's too late!

WARDER. [*Seriously.*] You're not serious?

BECKY. I am!

WARDER. You heard me give Eve my word?

BECKY. To a mad woman like that it doesn't count.

WARDER. I wonder just how much your word does count with you, Becky!

BECKY. [*With great and injured dignity.*] It counts everything!

WARDER. They seem to have hit on some very out-of-the-way places for your rendezvous. [*He smiles.*] Where is Huber's museum?

BECKY. Why, it's down on Fourteenth — [*She interrupts herself quickly.*] I don't know where it is!

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[*She moves away to collect herself.*

WARDER. [*Still smiling.*] And why the Washington Heights Inn in February? Or the Eden Musée ever?

BECKY. Of course some one else has been mistaken for me.

WARDER. [*Looks up.*] Ah! yes, that's a very possible idea.

BECKY. [*Goes to the sofa ~~and sits~~ beside him.*] Tom, don't read any more of the horrid things! Listen to me, don't let Eve go on. She'll ruin everything if she does. He'll never forgive her, never take her back.

WARDER. [*Reading and smiling.*] I didn't know you skated!

BECKY. I always loved skating. I only gave it up because it bored you. But I didn't skate then!

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WARDER. When?

BECKY. I — I don't — oh, whenever that beast says!

WARDER. St. Nicholas Rink, Friday, February eighteenth. [*He has noticed the slip she made, but hides the fact; he speaks as he goes on reading.*] Eve and her husband have had a big row, and he swears he'll never see her again, not even in the other place, that she's come between you and him and that he'll never forgive.

[*He finishes seriously, his bantering manner gone.*

BECKY. Oh, how untrue! I don't believe he said any such thing. Eve's jealous mind has distorted something else. The reason for our friendship — [*He rises with a half-angry movement, goes above the table looking for the envelope.*] such as it is — was to bring Eve and him together.

WARDER. From *your* point of view.

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BECKY. No, believe me, he isn't as bad as you think.

WARDER. [*Showing the papers.*] And what about these? They agree with me.

BECKY. If you believe those papers about him, then you must believe them about me.

WARDER. [*Coming to her.*] Heaven forbid, Becky! They would prove you a liar and a terrible one — which you're *not, are you?*

BECKY. How can you ask?

WARDER. If these were true — if I thought you had deceived me to such an extent — I could never trust you again so long as I lived, Becky.

BECKY. Shall you speak to Mr. Lindon about them?

WARDER. No, I wouldn't insult you by discussing you with Lindon, unless I was convinced every word and more here was true. I will see

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Eve to-morrow and perhaps get hold of these detectives myself.

BECKY. [*Almost trembling with dread.*] And now go and have your game. You need it! You're getting morbid. You'll be believing these beastly things if you don't get some exercise.

WARDER. What time is it?

BECKY. [*She looks at clock on the mantel, and speaks with her face still away from him.*] Three. When will you be back?

[*She conceals her anxiety to hear his answer.*

WARDER. Oh, six, I suppose.

BECKY. [*Facing him with a certain relief.*] Not till six — you're sure?

WARDER. Yes, you know your father's coming and there's no necessity of my seeing him.

BECKY. Oh! I forgot all about father's telegram! If it's money, I'm to be firm?

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WARDER. Absolutely.

BECKY. [*Taking hold of the envelope which he has in his left hand away from her.*] What are you going to do with those?

WARDER. You heard me tell Eve they shouldn't go out of my hands except into hers.

[*He gently but firmly removes her hand from the envelope.*

BECKY. And you meant it?

WARDER. Don't you mean a promise you give like that?

BECKY. Yes, of course. . . .

WARDER. [*Taking out his keys.*] I'm going to put them away in my room. I want to have a thorough, careful look through them later. Of course I can't let it rest here. The detectives must learn their mistake at once.

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BECKY. Yes, of course. But you are going to the Welds' now for your game?

WARDER. Yes, good-by.

[*Presses her hand. Gives her a tender but questioning look, but does not kiss her, and then goes out.*

BECKY. He's begun to distrust me already. Dear God in Heaven, if I ever get out of this, I'll never tell another lie so long as I live! [*She turns to the window. Smiles to* WARDER *outside and throws him a kiss, but afterward her face at once assumes its frightened look. Coming from the window, she sinks upon the piano stool.*] *He's* got to save me! Now he can prove that he is worthy a decent woman's friendship. [*She goes to the telephone and calls.*] Hello! Hello! [*She suddenly realizes.*] But I can't use the telephone! Central has told things already! [*She hangs up the receiver.*

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The telephone bell rings.] I must write him. [*The bell rings again. She takes up the receiver and speaks angrily.*] Hello? . . . No, I didn't ring. You've made a mistake. [*Hangs up the receiver.*] You telltale toad you! [*She writes.*] "If this note reaches you in time, please come over"— I ought to be able to get rid of father in half an hour — [*She looks up at the clock.*] "at half-past three." [*Seals note and addresses it.*] "Important."

[*Which she underlines.*

SERVANT. [*Entering Left, announces.*] Mr. Roland.

[ROLAND *is an elderly, dried-up little man with an air of the dandy jockey still clinging to him underneath his gray hairs and dyed moustache. A vivid carnation is in his buttonhole and a somewhat rusty springiness in his gait.*

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ROLAND. [*Coming in jauntily.*] Hello, Beck!

BECKY. [*With fictitious spirit.*] Father!

[*He starts to kiss her, forgetting the ever present cigarette in his mouth; then he stops to remove it, and does kiss her.*

ROLAND. How are you?

BECKY. I'm awfully glad to see you, but you can't stay long. Excuse me just a moment. Jenks, I want you to ring for a messenger and give him — [*Stops.*] no, when he comes, send him to me.

[*She has started to give* JENKS *the note, but changes her mind.* JENKS *bows and turns to leave.*

ROLAND. I say, Becky, might I have a glass of brandy? I took coffee after lunch on the train and it's poisoned me. Must have been canned coffee!

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BECKY. Very well, Jenks.

[*The* SERVANT *goes out Left.*

ROLAND. [*Lolling on the sofa.*] What the devil did you mean by sending me fifty dollars instead of five hundred?

BECKY. [*Surprised.*] I read it fifty! I never dreamed you'd ask for five hundred more!

[*Going toward him.*

ROLAND. I wrote five hundred and I must have it!

BECKY. My dear father, it's impossible. I tried as it was to get a little more from Tom, but he said "no," to send you the fifty dollars, with his love, but not one penny more, and to make you understand — and, father, he means it — that for the future you must keep within your allowance.

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[*The* SERVANT *enters with the brandy on a salver, and pours out a liqueur glass full.*

ROLAND. But *you'll* help me?

BECKY. [*Sitting on the opposite end of the sofa.*] No, he forbids it, and in the future I'm going to do what Tom wishes, and never deceive him even in a little thing again. [*To the* SERVANT *who hands the glass of brandy to* ROLAND.] The messenger boy hasn't come yet?

SERVANT. No, madam.

BECKY. If he doesn't come in five minutes, ring again.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*Starting to go,* ROLAND *stops him.*

ROLAND. Not so fast!

[*He points to the glass which he has emptied and the* SERVANT *pours out another glass.* ROLAND *takes it and puts it on the table behind him.*

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The SERVANT *busies himself with gathering up the after-dinner coffee cups and trying to overhear all that he can.*

BECKY. How is Mrs. Crespigny?

ROLAND. That woman will be the death or the marriage of me!

BECKY. Don't be absurd, father! She's given you the most comfortable home you've had for years. In that letter she wrote me she said she'd been a real mother to you.

ROLAND. The *mother* is a blind, a false lead to hide her hand! her trumps are marriage.

BECKY. Nonsense! Mrs. Crespigny must realize the difference in your positions.

ROLAND. You haven't lived with her social souvenirs as I have for four years! [*The* SERVANT *starts to take up the glass which* ROLAND *has put aside, but the latter stops him. The* SERVANT *has*

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delayed over his work as long as he dares in his desire to listen, and now goes out Left.] Becky, are you and Tom hungering for a mother-in-law?

BECKY. I don't know what you mean?

ROLAND. It's a question of five hundred dollars for me or a new Mrs. Roland!

BECKY. [*Astounded.*] You don't mean you owe Mrs. Crespigny that money?

ROLAND. Well, I've not paid my board bill as regularly as I might have wished.

BECKY. [*Rises, indignant.*] I'm ashamed of you!

ROLAND. I'm ashamed of myself, but shame won't pay bills; if it would, there'd have been many an unpaid debt washed off the slate in this world.

[*The* SERVANT *returns with a messenger boy.*

SERVANT. The messenger, madam.

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[BECKY *goes to the boy. During* BECKY'S *talk with the messenger,* ROLAND *fills his pocket with cigars from the box on the table.*

BECKY. I want you to take this note to its address, but only leave it in case the gentleman is in. Do you understand?

MESSENGER. Yes, ma'am.

BECKY. And come back and tell me.

MESSENGER. Yes, ma'am.

[*He goes out with the* SERVANT, *who has waited for him.*

ROLAND. I confess, my child, I have flirted a little with the dame in question.

BECKY. Father!

ROLAND. I have, in a way, led her on!

BECKY. And you always told me my mother's memory was the one precious thing left, that you meant to keep always untouched by your life!

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ROLAND. I don't deny, Becky, I'd be ashamed of it. I don't pretend Mrs. Crespigny would be a solace or a substitute; she would, at the best perhaps, be a resource, — but what she threatens to become unless I pay is a legal necessity!

BECKY. *Could* she do that?

ROLAND. I have been obliged at times by desperate need of ready money to suggest to her certain things as probabilities which were barely remote possibilities! And unfortunately — *unfortunately* — once or twice in writing.

BECKY. She has compromising letters of yours?

ROLAND. She has a large collection of illustrated postal cards from every place I've been since I've lodged with her, — they are her chief artistic dissipation — and a double set of Baltimore Duplicates, which I am afraid are the most foolish; as I am in the habit of making up with her in that

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way after little tiffs when she takes the stand of not being on speaking terms with me.

BECKY. Father! You've been a terrible idiot.

ROLAND. I have, my dear!

BECKY. Can't you get those cards back?

ROLAND. The rent due is "Mother's" price for them. [*Rising.*] You will make Tom give it to me, won't you? and I'll promise not to make such a fool of myself again.

[*Sitting on the arm of the sofa, drawing* BECKY *toward him and putting both his arms about her.*

BECKY. Tom's idea now is that you deserve all you get. He'll say you deserve Mrs. Crespigny.

[*Leaving him, she goes above the table.*

ROLAND. Oh, come, she's not so bad as that!

BECKY. How old is she?

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ROLAND. She has told me several ages. The general average would make her about forty-seven and a quarter.

BECKY. Pretty?

ROLAND. A fine figure of a woman and plays an A-one game of piquet.

BECKY. I see! When did her husband die?

ROLAND. He didn't die. He stole from the bank in which he was employed and went to jail, and she says for social reasons she was naturally obliged to take advantage of the divorce law. I have a suspicion myself he may have preferred jail!

BECKY. [*Comes quickly to him.*] Father, I would never forgive you if you did such a thing! It's degrading to me and to my mother's memory for you to accept any sort of indulgence at that woman's hands! When we get her paid, you must leave her house.

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ROLAND. That I can't and won't do, because I'm far too comfortable!

SERVANT. [*Entering Left, announces.*] Mrs. Crespigny!

ROLAND. [*Jumps up.*] Mrs. who?

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes in flamboyantly. She is a woman past the age of uncertainty, dressed gaudily, with an hour-glass figure; she has innumerable bracelets and bangles, and an imitation jewelled chain flaunts a heavy pair of lorgnettes, like a gargoyle hanging over a much-curved bust. Enormous wax pearls in her ears are in direct contrast to the dark beginnings of her otherwise russet-gold hair. Neither her shoes nor her stays fit, and both are too tight. She is brightly rouged, and yet the very failure of the façade reveals, somehow,*

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the honest interior of a human if forlornly foolish female.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Excuse me for intruding myself which I know is not social good form. Mis' Warder, I take it?

[BECKY *bows.*

ROLAND. [*Angrily.*] What do you mean by following me here?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*After severe look at him, turns back to* BECKY.] I want you to know the facts as between your father and me, and just how the matter is, and get your support that I done right! [*To* ROLAND.] I know your daughter is a lady if you ain't, and being a lady myself I have a certain pride. [*To* BECKY.] I've had a good deal of trouble persuading your father that though a lady sometimes takes in a paying guest she still holds her own in the social scale. I have friends of my

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own in the New York Smart Set! My niece married a Mr. Gubenhamers and lives in a perfectly elegant house of her own on Lennox Avenue. Do you know her? One thousand two hundred and fifty-three?

BECKY. No.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, don't you? Well, of course I know New York is big. Still, perhaps you know her husband's cousin, who is also in a way a relation? You will know her by name — Mrs. Otto Gurtz, President of the West Side Ladies Saturday Afternoon Social Gathering?

BECKY. No, I'm afraid I don't know her.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Well! I guess you don't read the Harlem society notes in the papers; if you did, you'd know what she stands for socially.

BECKY. Suppose we keep to the reason of your visit — I understand my father owes you money —

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[MRS. CRESPIGNY *turns sharply to* ROLAND.] and that you insist on being paid, which is natural —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. A trumped-up story! [*Going to* ROLAND.] I guess I done just about the right thing to chase on here after you! I'm sorry to say it, Mis' Warder, 'specially as it ain't exactly ladylike, but your father, with all his superfine qualities, is a liar! Yes, ma'am, between us two as ladies, he's an ornery liar!

[*Sinks into a chair in tears.* ROLAND *lights a cigarette angrily and goes up to the window.*

BECKY. Mrs. Crespigny, wouldn't it be better to behave more like a lady and talk less about one? Why break into the house of a woman you don't know and make a scene over a matter of rent due you —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. It ain't the rent! It's all a question of horses. When he left my house

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this morning, he said he was leaving for good unless I let him have —

ROLAND. [*Interrupting her.*] Mrs. Crespigny! You're hysterical! You're saying things you'll regret —

SERVANT. [*Entering, Left.*] The messenger has come back, madam.

BECKY. Oh, I want to see that boy! Excuse me a minute.

[*She hurries out and the* SERVANT *follows her.*

ROLAND. I knew you were in the train; that's why I staid in the smoker. And it decided me to keep my word never to go back to your house!

[*He sits determinedly in the arm-chair at Left.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. And you told her I was dunning you for the rent!

ROLAND. She has no more sympathy with my

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betting than you have! I wouldn't tell her the money was to put on Wet Blanket, Monday!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Rises and goes to him.*] *No*, you'd rather let her think I was a grasping harpy, when you know, if the truth's told, you owe me at least five times five hundred dollars with your borrowings and your losses at cards!

ROLAND. [*Smilingly.*] You haven't won lately.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Do you know why?

ROLAND. Oh, of course! You got out of the wrong side of the bed or you dreamed of a black horse!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Pathetically and a little ashamed.*] No. I've let you win a-purpose — because I was ashamed for you to owe me any more money. I'm trying to keep a little pride in you somehow, even if I have to cheat to do it.

[*She almost breaks down again, and turning*

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away, takes a powder puff from a little gilt box and powders her nose to cover up the traces of tears.

ROLAND. Well, do you think it's pleasant for me to owe you money? A kind friend like you! [*Going to the mantel and flicking his cigarette ash in the fireplace.*] One reason I want to take advantage of this tip for Monday is to pay you if I win.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes, and then go board somewhere else? Is that your idea? Or to stay here?

ROLAND. Well, my daughter and her husband want me. [*Leaning on the mantel.*] They say their home is my home.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going toward him, alarmed.*] But you won't stay, will you? I left word with Josephine to have your favorite meenoo cooked

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for a late supper in case you'd come back. We'll have a game to-night. I'll play you a rubber for the five hundred — it's against my conscience to give it to you outright for horse-racing.

ROLAND. *Loan* it to me!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes, of course! I always mean loan. Oh, the flat'd be just too dreadful lonesome without you! Say you'll come back! Quick, before Mis' Warder comes in! Won't you?

ROLAND. [*Coming toward her.*] Well, if you make it a personal favor to you in this way, I can't exactly refuse! And that ends the most serious quarrel we've had yet.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Embarrassedly.*] If we was man and wife, there wouldn't be any need of such quarrels. The money'd be yours then to do as you liked with.

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ROLAND. Don't tempt me! You know you're a great deal too kind to me as it is and I'm no good to take as much advantage of you as I do.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, pshaw! Say! I wish you'd help me to get on the right side of your daughter. You're too delicate to say anything, but I always suspect it's her that stands between us.

BECKY. [*Coming back.*] I'm very sorry, but you must go at once. I have an important engagement here in a few minutes and must change my dress. I will promise you, Mrs. Crespigny —

ROLAND. [*Interrupts.*] I have made an arrangement with Mrs. Crespigny that is agreeable to her, without Tom's and your assistance —

BECKY. [*Alarmed.*] Father, not —

ROLAND. [*Shakes his head.*] It seems I exaggerated my indebtedness a little and Mrs. Cres-

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pigny exaggerated her desire to be paid this month and —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes, I was just mad clean through and would have said anything!

BECKY. Well, I'm glad it's settled, but it seems a pity you couldn't have accomplished it without the railway journey, especially as I must ask you to excuse me at once.

[*She guides* MRS. CRESPIGNY *toward the door Left, but* MRS. CRESPIGNY, *instead of going out, makes a circle around an arm-chair and settles herself in it.* BECKY *goes despairingly to* ROLAND.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, I don't regret the trip over, because I've been dying to meet you, Mis' Warder, ever since I had the pleasure of knowing your father in a taty taty sort of way. And we can catch the four-fifteen.

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BECKY. Good! [*Crossing to her, and holding out her hand.*] I'm sorry I can't ask you to stay.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, I can come over nearly any day! I've got such a perfectly lovely servant girl now. I give her every night out and she works like a dog all day — and you can trust her with everything! Can't you, Mr. Roland?

ROLAND. You can trust her with me all right.

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *laughs loudly.*

BECKY. Father!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Ain't he killing! Do you inherit his sense of humor? He can get anything he wants out of me with just one of them wittycisms. [ROLAND *winks aside to* BECKY.] Of course, I won't say that he ain't an expensive boarder — [BECKY *sinks in the chair near Centre, discouraged.*] — but I consider he cuts both ways and at the finish the ends meets.

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BECKY. I think I gather what you mean. I'm afraid you'll lose your train!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I mean it's hard for a lady what's got it in her blood, to take boarders, because usually the boarders is beneath what the lady's been accustomed to and she don't feel at home with 'em. Now with your father it's different, because he's a Roland and I'm a Crespigny.

BECKY. Oh, is that your own name? I thought —

ROLAND. [*Interrupting.*] No, Mrs. Crespigny's maiden name was Ruggles.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes, mamma made what we'd call a messyliance, married beneath her, you know. But she never descended, nor allowed us to neither, to papa's social level. Mamma was a O'Roorke. You know, one of them early

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high-toned families that came over from Amsterdam in the *Mayflower.*

BECKY. I see!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Mamma often said to me, says she, "Jennie" —

BECKY. [*With her patience exhausted, jumps up, interrupting her.*] I must say good-by now — I've no time to dress.

[*She hurries out Right.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Rising.*] Well, do you think I made any sort of a hit with her?

ROLAND. My dear friend, I've told you before, you're not quite my daughter's style.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. But why not? She seems real refined.

[ROLAND *groans.* WARDER *comes in Left. He does not see* MRS. CRESPIGNY *on his entrance.*

WARDER. Hello, father! I didn't think I was

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going to have this pleasure. I had an engagement to play racquets with Billy Weld, but he broke down in his motor somewhere between Tuxedo and here and I couldn't wait.

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes a few steps and beckons to* ROLAND *to introduce* WARDER.

ROLAND. Mrs. Crespigny, Mr. Warder.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Bows.*] Pleased to make your acquaintance.

[*She turns away with a rather grand manner.* WARDER *looks from her to* ROLAND *and shakes his head, then goes to the writing-table with some letters he has brought in from the hall.*

ROLAND. Excuse me one moment. [*Beckons to* MRS. CRESPIGNY *and whispers to her aside.*] Wait for me!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. In the hall?

ROLAND. Lord, no! At the station!

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MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh! [*Going, she turns at door to bid* WARDER *good-by.*] If you should ever be coming over to Baltimore, Mr. Warder, why just drop in!

[*She goes out Left.*

WARDER. Where's Becky?

ROLAND. [*Going to him.*] She's upstairs. I just wanted to thank you for the money you sent me day before yesterday.

WARDER. What money?

ROLAND. The check for fifty dollars Becky mailed me.

WARDER. [*Starts, but controls it immediately.*] Oh, a check for fifty dollars —

ROLAND. The joke on me is that what I wanted was five hundred!

[*Digs* TOM *in ribs.*

WARDER. [*Looking off where* BECKY *went, absorbed in his thoughts.*] Oh, five hundred!

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ROLAND. Yes, just five hundred. [*He looks at* WARDER, *and waits; hums a song and dances a few steps.*] Nothing doing, I suppose?

WARDER. No. Father, the fact is —

ROLAND. Yes, I know, Becky told me. Excuse me, I've got to catch a train. Good-by, my boy.

WARDER. [*With his thoughts elsewhere.*] Good-by!

[ROLAND *goes out whistling "Waiting at the Church."* WARDER *stands a moment thinking, then takes out his key chain.*

SERVANT. [*Entering, shows in* LINDON.] Mr. Lindon to see Mrs. Warder, sir.

[WARDER *looks up with a start, which he immediately controls, and disguises completely his thoughts and emotions.*

LINDON. How are you, Warder?

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WARDER. [*Speaks very casually and pleasantly, with complete self-control.*] Good afternoon, Lindon. [*Sees* SERVANT *about to go to* BECKY, *stops him.*] Jenks! [JENKS *goes to him.* WARDER *gives him a key from his chain.*] Go to my room and get me a large blue envelope from the upper right-hand drawer of the desk.

JENKS. Yes, sir.

[*He goes out Left.*]

WARDER. Excuse me, Mrs. Warder is out. She'll be sorry.

LINDON. [*Surprised.*] Out?

WARDER. Yes.

LINDON. But surely there must be some mistake?

WARDER. No, I'm sorry. I assure you she's out.

LINDON. Oh! Then do you mind if I wait?

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WARDER. Is that scarcely worth while? I must be off at once, and I imagine Mrs. Warder is out for her usual bridge afternoon.

LINDON. I think, on the contrary, she must be surely coming back, and if you don't mind, I'll wait.

WARDER. [*With an apparently good-natured laugh.*] I don't like to insist against your apparently superior knowledge —

LINDON. [*Also smiling.*] No, no, it's only a note I received a few moments ago at the club. Here it is. [*Takes it from his pocket.*] That she must see me this afternoon. You know your wife is kindly acting as intermediary between Eve and myself. It is in regard to that. [*He hands the note to* WARDER, *who glances at it and returns it without reading.*] As it only came half an hour ago, I feel sure Mrs. Warder must expect to return soon.

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SERVANT. [*Entering with an envelope, which he gives to* WARDER.] That is all I can find, sir.

WARDER. [*Humorously.*] That's all I want, so it's all right. Jenks, am I wrong in understanding that Mrs. Warder is out?

SERVANT. Yes, sir. Mrs. Warder is in, sir.

WARDER. Oh! I beg your pardon, Lindon.

LINDON. That's all right.

WARDER. [*To* JENKS.] Jenks, say to Mrs. Warder, Mr. Lindon is here. You needn't say anything about me. I'm off.

SERVANT. Yes, sir.

[*Goes out Right.*

LINDON. I'm not driving you away, I hope.

WARDER. Oh, no, I have some important papers to go over. Make yourself comfortable. Good-by.

LINDON. Thanks, old man. Good-by.

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[*He sits on the sofa, as* WARDER *goes out Left.*

LINDON. Well! She did send for you, Freddy, old son! Now's your chance!

SERVANT. [*Reëntering.*] Mrs. Warder will be down at once.

LINDON. Thank you. [*The* SERVANT *goes out Left.* LINDON *goes to the piano and sings a verse of a song, "Everything comes to him who waits," etc. An idea comes to him. He weighs it, accepts it, smiles, and stops playing.*] I will! By George, I will!

[*He rises.*

[BECKY *hurries in from the Right and goes quickly toward him, crying, "Fred!" in a tone of distress and excitement. She leaves the door open behind her.* LINDON, *before she realizes what he is doing, has met her, taken her in his arms, and kissed her. She forces*

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herself away from him, standing for a moment speechless with rage and astonishment.

LINDON. I told you, didn't I, Becky?

[*Tries to embrace her again.*

BECKY. [*Slowly and deliberately.*] That's just exactly what Tom said you'd do!

LINDON. *What!*

BECKY. Ten to one, he said, if I sent for you again, you'd kiss me.

LINDON. [*In alarm and astonishment.*] Yes, but what —

BECKY. But I wouldn't believe him! I said, and I believed, he did you an injustice.

LINDON. So you talked me all over with him, did you! Then why did you send for me to-day?

BECKY. Because I was a fool, if you want the true treason!

LINDON. My dear Becky —

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BECKY. Oh, you'll hear more and worse than that if you stay to listen! I advise you to go! You can't help me. I don't trust you. You might even make matters worse. It may have been all done purposely as it is.

LINDON. Oh!

BECKY. You see I'm ready to believe all I've heard of you, now that you've shown your true silly self to me in that one sickening moment, and I'd rather not be saved at all than be saved by you!

[*She leans for a second against the corner of the writing-table.*

LINDON. How saved? From what?

BECKY. Never mind! I only want to say one more thing to you and then go, please. But I want this to ring in your ears so long as you remember me! There is only one man in this world

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I love, and that's Tom, and there's only one man I despise and that's you! Lindon, Fred Lindon! You know who I mean! I know now what our friendship meant to you and I wish I could cut out of my life every second of every hour I've spent with you! I've been a fool woman, and you've been a cad, — but thank God, there are men in the world — real men — and one is my husband. Now go, please! Eve's a fool not to jump at the chance of getting rid of you and I shall tell her so.

[*She turns away from him with a movement of dismissal.*

LINDON. [*Going toward her.*] Do! For that, at least, I shall thank you, as well as for our delightful friendship, which I am sorry to have end so contrary to my expectations.

BECKY. [*With her eyes down, speaks in a low,*

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shamed voice.] This room is too small for you and me at this moment, — which leaves?

[*He smiles, hesitates a moment, then sits in the arm-chair at Left.* BECKY *gives a half-smothered exclamation of rage and starts to leave the room.* LINDON *rises quickly.*

LINDON. No, no, I was only joking! I'm sorry you take the whole affair so seriously. Allow me.

[*He bows and goes out Left.*

BECKY. [*Stands quietly thinking a moment, then makes up her mind.*] Eve herself is the one to help me! But I can't go to her till I'm sure she'll listen and understand — Laura! [*She sits by the table and takes up the receiver of the telephone.*] Seven eight Plaza. Yes! It's a lady this time, so I hope you won't have to listen! Hello! Is Miss — Oh, is that you, Laura? Can you come over at once? I am in dreadful trouble! Oh,

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well, after dinner, then! No, I was going out, but I won't — it's too important. You were right — and Eve's right too. Never mind, I can't tell you over the 'phone. I'll explain everything to-night, only don't fail me. You can prevent a real catastrophe that has no need to happen. — Oh, that's all right, don't stop another minute, then. Thank you with all my heart. [*She hangs up the receiver, gives a long sigh, and sits worriedly thinking.* WARDER *comes in, serious but calm. Looking at him, half frightened, she makes a great effort to be natural, and to be in a good humor.*] Hello, Tom! Your game finished already?

WARDER. We didn't play. Weld didn't get back to town. Any callers?

BECKY. No.

WARDER. I thought I saw some one leaving — from the top of the street.

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BECKY. Did you? Oh! it was probably father; he came.

WARDER. No I spoke with your father some fifteen minutes ago. He told me about the money you gave him.

[*A second's pause;* BECKY *looks down and then up at him.*

BECKY. Are you angry?

WARDER. You gave me your word you wouldn't.

BECKY. But I was so sorry for him — that's why he came to-day, he said he must have it; I couldn't refuse him and you weren't here!

WARDER. He said you mailed him my check day before yesterday.

[BECKY *is silent, trapped, frightened. A pause, then she speaks in a low voice.*

BECKY. I'm so sorry —

[*A second's pause.*

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WARDER. It looked to me like Fred Lindon.

[BECKY, *more frightened, realizing what is hanging over her, like a drowning person who cannot swim, flounders helplessly about in the next few speeches, trying to save herself by any and every means that she thinks may help her for the moment.*

BECKY. Well, I'll be honest, it *was* Fred Lindon!

WARDER. [*Anger getting the best of him.*] After everything — your word of honor, Eve's accusations, my absolute desire — you sent for him to come and see you!

BECKY. No, no, you mustn't think that, Tom! He came of his own accord of course, — I suppose to see if I would see him! I didn't know it!

WARDER. [*Wary, suspicious, to lead her on.*] Then why did you see him? You could easily excuse yourself.

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BECKY. No, you don't understand. [*She flounders hopelessly.*] I didn't know it was he! Don't you see?

WARDER. No, I don't see!

[*Watches her with a face growing harder and harder with each lie she tells.*

BECKY. But I'm telling you — it was just like this; I was upstairs and Jenks came — and said a gentleman wanted to see me in the drawing-room. Just that, don't you see — a gentleman. [*She sees the doubting look in his face and mistaking it, tries to make her story more plausible.*] I was surprised too, and said "Who?" and Jenks said the gentleman gave no name — [*He turns sharply away from her, unable to face her as she tells the lies.*] Yes, I know it was funny — I thought so then. I suppose Jenks considered it a joke, — and I suppose he didn't give his

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name for that very reason, for fear I wouldn't see him — [WARDER, *looking up as if to stop her, sees the door Right open and quickly closes it.*] Of course the moment I came into the room and saw who it was, I excused myself, and he left.

WARDER. [*In a voice not loud but full of anger and emotion.*] Lies! all of it! Every word a lie, and another and another and another!

BECKY. [*Breathless with fright, gasping.*] Tom!

WARDER. [*Going to her.*] You sent for him! [*She is too frightened to speak, but she shakes her head in a last desperate effort at denial.*] Don't shake your head! I know what I'm talking about and for the first time with you, I believe! [*She puts up her hands helplessly and backs away from him.*] I saw your note to him! [*She starts with a sense of anger added to her other emotions.*] I

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read it here, in this room; he gave it to me before you came down.

BECKY. The beast!

WARDER. [*With biting satire.*] *You're* going to misjudge him too!

BECKY. No, Tom, I'll tell you the truth and all of it!

WARDER. Naturally, now you've *got to!*

BECKY. No — wait! I did send for him — it was to tell him about those papers of Eve's.

WARDER. Yes, you must plan your escape together!

BECKY. No! because I still believed he was decent. I thought it was his duty, that he would claim it as his right, to prevent such a scandal as Eve threatened to make, which he knew I didn't deserve.

WARDER. Hah!

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BECKY. You may sneer, but I don't! Yes, I broke my promise to you — what else could I do? You wouldn't let me send for him! And he came! And he did what you said he would. He took me in his arms before I could stop him, and kissed me.

[*She bends over the back of the chair at Centre on which she is leaning, and sobs.*

WARDER. [*Goes to her, speaking with bitter irony.*] Charming! And you turned on him, of course! Played the shocked and surprised wife and ordered him out of the house!

BECKY. Yes. But I did! Why do you speak as if I didn't?

WARDER. Do you expect me to believe this, too?

BECKY. [*Facing him.*] I don't expect, you've got to!

WARDER. Do you think you can go on telling

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lies forever and I'll go on blindly believing them as I have for three years?

BECKY. Even you couldn't have turned on him with more anger and disgust than I did!

WARDER. I couldn't believe you if I wanted to! You've destroyed every breath of confidence in me!

BECKY. It's the truth I'm telling you now!

WARDER. In everything — everything that has come up since my eyes were first forced half open — you have told me a lie!

BECKY. It's the truth! It's the truth!

WARDER. [*Continues, hardly hearing her.*] The money to your father, the first lie, and to-day made a double one! All this rotten evidence of Eve's — another dozen! Your promise that Lindon's visit Thursday should be his last, the next!

BECKY. I meant it then — I meant it truthfully.

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WARDER. [*Ignoring her interruption.*] His visit after all to-day — that led of course to a mass of lies! And then the truth! He kissed you! And then another lie and another dozen to try and save yourself!

BECKY. [*Quietly, in a hushed, frightened voice.*] By everything in this world and in the next that I hold dear and reverence, I've told you the truth at last.

WARDER. You don't know what's true when you hear it or when you speak it! I could never believe in you again! Never have confidence! How could I? Ask any man in the world, and his answer would be the same!

[*He turns and goes away from her, to control his anger, which threatens to get the best of him.*

BECKY. [*Sobbing.*] No, no, Tom! Don't!

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don't say that! You must believe in me! You must believe in me!

WARDER. [*After a pause, collects himself and comes to the writing-table.*] Becky, you and I must say good-by to each other. We must finish separately. [*A silence. She looks at him in dumb horror and surprise.*] Do you understand?

BECKY. [*In a low voice.*] No!

WARDER. We must separate. Quietly — no fuss, no divorce unless you wish it. [*A pause, she does not answer. He goes toward her and repeats.*] No divorce unless you wish it.

BECKY. [*With simple but deep pathos.*] I love you.

WARDER. You must stay on in the house for the present, till you can make your plans. That will help keep the thing quiet, too.

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BECKY. Tom! Do you really mean all you're saying? Do you realize what it must mean for me — for both of us?

WARDER. Yes.

BECKY. To-morrow, perhaps — ?

WARDER. No. I shall go to Boston to-night for a few days; when I come back, you may have settled on something. If you haven't, I can manage all right. I don't want to press you about that, only —

BECKY. I will not stay in your house one single day without you.

WARDER. You'll have to! My price for hushing up Lindon and Eve, and every one else, is that you on your side act with dignity, and as I think wisest.

BECKY. [*Going to the arm-chair at Left.*] No! A woman like me whose heart is breaking, whether

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she's right or wrong, can't act like that. *She can't do it!*

[*She sinks into the chair, bursting into tears.*

WARDER. [*Beside her.*] Try. For your sake as well as mine. ~~Good-by, Becky.~~

BECKY. [*With the tears choking her voice.*] I told you the truth the last time. Oh, can't you believe me?

WARDER. No — good-by.

[*Going.*

BECKY. I love you and only you and you always —

WARDER. [*Turns in the doorway.*] The club address will reach me!

[*He goes out, closing the door behind him.* BECKY *sits still a moment thinking; then she goes to the writing-table, rings the bell, and takes up a time-table. Her hands drop upon the*

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table in utter dejection and her head lowers as the tears come again fast and thick.

SERVANT. [*Entering Left.*] Yes, madam?

BECKY. [*Controlling her emotion and hiding as best she can the traces of it.*] Tell Perkins to pack my small trunk and hand-bag. I am going to Baltimore to spend a day or so with my father.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

BECKY. And then come back, please.

SERVANT. Very good, madam.

[*Goes out.*

BECKY. [*Takes up the telephone.*] Hello! 708 Plaza. [*As she listens for the answer she looks about the room, the control goes from her face, and the tears come once more; she brushes them away and tries to speak in a conventional tone without displaying her emotion, which is however plainly evident.*] Hello, I want Miss Fraser, please. . . .

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Oh, ask her to call me the minute she's free, please. Mrs. Warder. [*She hangs up the receiver and writes.*] "I am leaving now. You will at least believe that I cannot turn you out of your house, nor can I live in it one single day without you. It is ready waiting for you as I shall be all the rest of my life if you can ever again believe —"

[*She stops as the* SERVANT *enters and comes to her.*

SERVANT. Madam?

[BECKY *finishes writing silently.*

BECKY. [*Sealing the note.*] Has Mr. Warder gone yet?

SERVANT. Only just this second went out, madam. He told me to pack his bag and meet him at the station with it.

BECKY. [*Rising.*] Give this to Mr. Warder with his things

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[*Gives the note.*

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*He goes out Left. The telephone bell rings.*

BECKY. [*Going to the table, sits, and takes up the receiver. Again she does her best to keep the emotion out of her voice, but only partly succeeds.*] Hello! Laura? I'm so sorry, after all, I can't see you to-night. Tom has been called to — Chicago suddenly on business — yes, isn't it too bad? And I've had a telegram that father isn't very well, so I am taking the five-twenty train to Baltimore. Yes, I'll write. No, I don't think he's seriously ill. Good-by!

[*She hangs up the receiver, dropping her head on the table and sobbing heart-brokenly as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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ACT III

The same night. At Mr. Roland's rooms in Mrs. Crespigny's flat, Baltimore.

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ACT III

MR. ROLAND'S *rooms in* MRS. CRESPIGNY'S *flat in Baltimore. This is the parlor of a cheap flat, with the bedroom, through an arch, originally intended for the dining room and lit by a narrow window on a well. There is red paper on the walls and red globes for the electric lights. An ugly set of furniture, with many tidies, a strange conglomeration of cheap feminine "nick-nacks," relieved by a sporting print or two, a frame of prize ribbons, and a few other masculine belongings which have been added to the original condition of the room, like a thin coat of paint. At back is a bow-window beside a sofa. On the Left*

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is the opening into the bedroom, and beside this a door leads to the hall. There is a centre-table with chairs on either side and a Morris chair down on the Right. A sideboard in the upper Left corner.

ROLAND *and* MRS. CRESPIGNY *are playing piquet at the centre-table. A "Teddy Bear" with a pink ribbon bow about its neck is sitting on the table near* MRS. CRESPIGNY. *They play on through part of the scene.* ROLAND *stops to light a cigarette, and* MRS. CRESPIGNY *takes advantage of the pause to powder her face and preen herself in a pocket mirror.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You don't think you smoke too many of them?

ROLAND. If my smoking is disagreeable to you, I might spend my evenings at the club.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You know different! You

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can't make that an excuse for skinning out of spending your evenings at home. I only wish't I smoked 'em myself. I've read in the papers that real ladies do now — but I guess it's the fast set, and I always was conservative.

ROLAND. [*Playing.*] Don't talk; study your cards. If you don't take care, you'll win!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Will I? Excuse me, I wasn't thinking. [*She plays a card, and as* ROLAND *takes the trick she takes up her mirror and examines wrinkles.*] I believe I'll have massage. I heard of a fine massoor yesterday.

ROLAND. Masseuse, you mean, I hope.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Massoor! Massoose is plural. The singular is massoor. You forget I was educated in New Orleans.

[*She rises and goes to the sideboard and pours out a brandy and soda.*

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ROLAND. Where's my brandy and soda?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I'm getting it.

[*Bringing the glass down to the table.*

ROLAND. That's a good girl. Thank you, Mrs. Crespigny.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Ain't it funny, good friends as we've been for so long now, we've kep' on calling each other "Mr." and "Mrs."? S'pose it wouldn't be etiquay to call each other by our first names.

ROLAND. Etiquette.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. *Etiquay!* You can correct my English when you want to, but my French I've kep' pure since school, and I remember perfeckly — all words ending in e-t you pernounce A.

ROLAND. What is your first name?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Genevieve, but I was always

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called Jenny by my first h — ! I mean — I was always called Jenny by my schoolgirl friends.

ROLAND. [*Playing.*] Very interesting.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Playing.*] I think your first name's real pretty!

ROLAND. [*Taking the trick.*] Tut, tut! You're getting too skittish, Mrs. Crespigny.

[*She laughs a little embarrassedly.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. It's your fault!

ROLAND. [*Playing card, and laughing.*] Then I apologize!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Playing card, and giggling.*] Oh, you needn't!

ROLAND. [*Laughing more at her than with her, but realizing that she will not know the difference.*] I insist.

[*He takes the trick.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Anybody'd think we was

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engaged to be married or something of that sort, wouldn't they?

ROLAND. I hope not!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, I don't know! I remember some postal cards what I've read that might be construed to lean that way. [ROLAND *rises and gets a cigarette from the box on the table in the bow-window.*] There was one from Atlantic City that was just too sweet for anything! You sent it after we had that ridickerlous quarrel on the board walk.

ROLAND. What about?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I lost my self-respect and asked you to kiss me, 'cause you said you was grateful for the fifty dollars I gave you for your poker losses the night before. And you handed me back my money and said if that was the price of the loan — oh, how you hurt my feelings!

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[*With a touch of futile emotion.*

ROLAND. [*Coming back to his chair.*] That was only a bluff! Come along, I'll play you a game for the whole bunch of postal cards.

[*Takes up the second deck and shuffles.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Rising, speaks rather grandly.*] Nobody won't never get them postal cards from me except over my dead body. [*Cuts the cards, and* ROLAND *deals.*] And I intend to refer to 'em every chance I get in hopes that some day — just in a desperate fit, maybe — you'll up and marry me to stop me.

[*Sits again.*

ROLAND. Go on, play.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You've owned up you're comfortable in my cute little flat — and I don't nag.

[*Both take up their hands, both play, and she takes trick.*

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ROLAND. You haven't the right, but as my wife — nay, nay, Pauline.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You've got the best rooms here, and if you ever do pay any board, don't I lend it right back to you the next day?

ROLAND. Isn't it a little indelicate to remind me of that, Mrs. Crespigny?

[*Playing.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Getting a little angry.*] Well, I guess the indelicacy's even! [*She plays and starts to take the trick. He stops her and takes it himself.*] Oh, excuse me, I'm at your beck and nod, and I've even so far forgot my family pride as to hint that you wasn't unacceptable to me in a nearer relation.

ROLAND. There you go again! Keep off the thin ice!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Throws down her cards and*

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loses her temper outright.] Well, why won't you marry me? I may have forgot my pride, but I never forget myself. You know you wouldn't dare step over the invisible line between the dumb-waiter and the bath-room, what separates your apartment from mine in the flat.

ROLAND. One moment, please. Have I ever even hinted at taking the slightest advantage of your unprotected position in this house? [*He rises in mock dignity.*] Who's kept further from that invisible line, you or I?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Well, I must say you've always behaved toward me like a perfect gentleman. [*He sits again and takes another cigarette.*] But jes' let's speak the truth — if you can about anything! [*He fumbles in his vest pockets.*] Matches? [*She rises, goes to the sideboard, and finding a box of matches, brings it back to the table.*

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During the first part of the following speech she makes nervous and ineffectual efforts to strike matches, in each case breaking off the heads without any result.] You know you ain't wanted at your clubs; that's why you first took to playin' evenings with me — that, and 'cause I was easy! You know that here in Baltimore you're called a tout, a broken-down gambler, and a has-been, but I've always hoped you was a will-be for me. [*Irritated by her repeated failures, he takes the matchbox from her and lights his cigarette with the first match he strikes.*] You know your old friends'd rather go 'round the block than stop and talk to you in the street. Yes, you know it as well as I do! And you've lived off me, borrowed money of me, led me to caring for you, let me take care of you as if you was — my own child, and I've saved you from bein' a drunken sot! [*Her voice*

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fills with tears, but her anger gets the best of her, and she finishes strongly, striking the table with her beringed hand as she leans across toward him.] Now, why ain't I good enough for you?

ROLAND. [*Rising, really angry, and his dignity offended.*] Mrs. Crespigny —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, you needn't get on your high horse or I'll win this rubber for the five hundred! I know you're worthless, and I know you don't always tell the truth, but through it all you've been a real gentleman to me, and I realized yesterday, when I thought you was gone for good, what it meant to me. I'm a decent woman, Mr. Roland, if I am a fool, and I swear I'm good enough for you!

ROLAND. So far as that goes, you're too good for me, but I've got others to consider. My daughter —

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MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Interrupting him.*] Yes, I know she's against me. [*She sits again, and with determination.*] Well, I'm against her, and perhaps some day I'll have a chance to pay her back!

ROLAND. That's talking foolishly! In the first place, my allowance would stop the day I married.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Well, haven't I got enough for two? It's looked mighty like it the last couple a years.

[*She nervously takes the "Teddy Bear" from the table to hide her embarrassment at her boldness, and laying it flat on her knee, face downward, reties the pink bow on its neck.*

ROLAND. [*Sitting, he gathers the cards together and shuffles them.*] Come, come, here we are again on one of those useless discussions. Come along, give me another brandy and soda.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Resignedly.*] All right.

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[*Rises, and takes his glass, replacing the "Teddy Bear" on the table.*] This will be your second before twelve o'clock and it's got to be a little weakish. [*She goes to the sideboard. The front door-bell is heard ring.*] My goodness! who can that be?

[*The bell rings again.*

ROLAND. Don't know, old girl, but go on, I'll deal for you.

[*He deals.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going to the table, cuts the cards.*] I just love to have you call me "old girl" — it seems so nice and familiar.

[*The bell rings again, and* MRS. CRESPIGNY, *taking the "Teddy Bear" with her, places it on the side table at Left and goes out.* ROLAND *deals. After a moment's pause* BECKY *comes in, carrying a hand-bag. She enters with an air of bravado, which fades instantly*

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that she observes ROLAND *does not see her. But her pathetic, timid look vanishes immediately when he looks up.*

ROLAND. [*Going on dealing, without looking up.*] Who was it?

BECKY. [*With forced gayety.*] Hello, father!

ROLAND. Good Heavens!

BECKY. [*Putting her bag on the table at Left.*] Aren't you surprised?

ROLAND. [*Dryly.*] Very.

BECKY. And pleased?

ROLAND. Where in the world did you come from?

BECKY. New York; the next train after you. Give me a kiss. How are you?

[*Kisses him.*

ROLAND. What have you come for? Where are you stopping?

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BECKY. Here!

ROLAND. At what hotel?

BECKY. No hotel — here with you!

ROLAND. Nonsense! There's no place for you in the flat.

BECKY. Why not? I gave my check to the expressman and my trunk will be around in the morning.

ROLAND. These two rooms are all I have. [*Showing the opening to the Left.*] Take a look at the bedroom — a beastly, dark little hole with one window that doesn't look out, — it looks in! The bedroom of the flat we use for a dining room. Mrs. Crespigny sleeps in the servant's room — so she tells me.

BECKY. Father!

ROLAND. Now you can see what nice sort of

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surroundings your poor old father's had to put up with these last years.

BECKY. [*Takes off her hat and cloak and puts them on sofa at Right.*] You have only yourself to blame! You could live splendidly on the allowance Tom makes you in the one club you've got left.

ROLAND. You needn't take off your things, you can't stay here.

BECKY. Oh, can't I? I've come to pay you a little visit, and here I stay to-night and several nights.

[*Comes to the centre-table and starts to collect cards.*

ROLAND. Be careful! That's Genevieve's hand and we must finish this sometime — I'm well ahead. [*Carefully places the cards, properly divided, on the table at Left.*] And really, Becky,

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you can't stay here. You can go to a hotel if you want to, or back to New York. You're in the way here! I'm an old man; this sort of thing upsets me! There's no room and there's no bed for you. [*Crosses to the Morris chair and sits.*] What the devil do you mean, turning up here well toward midnight, and threatening to stay, when for years I've been trying to get you to come to Baltimore, and you know you were ashamed to come?

BECKY. [*Sitting in the chair Left of the centre-table.*] That isn't true, father; I always said I'd come if you'd give up certain things.

ROLAND. Well, I haven't given them up, so why have you come? What's the joke? And where's Tom?

BECKY. [*After a second's pause.*] That's just it. Tom has been called to — San Francisco —

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suddenly — just after you left, on business — and the idea came to me, at last I'll make that visit to father! It'll be a good chance for me to settle Mrs. Crespigny, too!

ROLAND. You couldn't have come at a more inopportune time! I was very busy this evening.

BECKY. Yes, I know, — piquet with Mrs. C.! I'll finish it with you.

[*Rises and goes to get the cards.*

ROLAND. No, you won't! You'll go to a hotel for the night and I'll come and have a decent lunch with you to-morrow.

BECKY. I can't go to a hotel. I've come away without a penny. I had to borrow half the money for my ticket from Perkins.

ROLAND. Where is Perkins?

BECKY. In New York. I knew, of course, there'd be no place for her here.

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ROLAND. Any of the hotel people here will trust you.

BECKY. I won't ask them. I forgot to get Tom's address, so I can't send to him for any money. I've got to stay with you, father.

[*She sits on the arm of the Morris chair and puts her arm about her father.*

ROLAND. You're a very boring person!

BECKY. That's a kind welcome for a dear and only daughter!

ROLAND. And I'm not going to have myself made uncomfortable by you!

BECKY. Please let me stay for a day or two, maybe a little longer or maybe not so long. I'll promise not to be any trouble; I'll sleep on the sofa!

ROLAND. Humph! You don't know that sofa! That was made in the antebellum and the ante-

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springum days! Even a cat couldn't sleep on it without chloroform.

BECKY. Well, I don't expect to sleep, father, and if I don't, you won't know it. I've *got* to stay.

[*Rises and goes away and stands by the table with her back toward him.*

ROLAND. [*Looks at her, suddenly suspicious.*] Becky, you're not telling me the truth. Something's the matter.

BECKY. [*Turning toward him, taking a high moral stand.*] Really, father!

ROLAND. There's something wrong. What is it?

BECKY. Nothing.

ROLAND. Oh, come, I'm your father, and I know the look in your eyes when you're not telling the truth; you get that look from me! You're

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telling me a lie — tell me the truth. What does it mean?

BECKY. [*After a second's pause, bursts out with all her pent-up feelings, which she has been trying to hide.*] I've left Tom.

ROLAND. How do you mean — "Left Tom"?

BECKY. Left him for good. I'll never live with him again.

ROLAND. Nonsense!

BECKY. Never! You don't understand.

[*She sits again beside the table, leaning her elbows upon it and resting her face between her two hands.*

ROLAND. No, I don't! and I don't want to!

BECKY. I've left his house in New York for good.

ROLAND. What's your reason? What's he done?

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BECKY. He's deceived me.

ROLAND. [*Rising.*] Tom! Never!

BECKY. Father, I can't go back to him; I can't! Don't ask me any more questions, only keep me with you — please, keep me with you. . . .

ROLAND. [*Going to her.*] You're upset about matters. You've had a quarrel, that's all, and you're going back to-night.

BECKY. No. I've told him I'll never come back and I've come to stay — with you.

ROLAND. But I won't have it! In the first place, Mrs. Crespigny wouldn't have it either. She'd be jealous of your being here — and after all it's her flat. And I don't believe what you tell me about Tom.

BECKY. We can go somewhere else. Who is Mrs. Crespigny? [*Rises, and going to him takes hold of his sleeve.*] And I'm your daughter.

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Besides, Tom's allowance will stop. From now on you and I must get on together with the little money I have from mother.

ROLAND. Nothing of the sort. Even if you did leave Tom, you can make him take care of you.

BECKY. I won't take any money from Tom! No more money! Do you hear me, father?

ROLAND. [*Becoming more angry.*] No, I don't hear you! And I have something to say about my end of all this, which is that you've got to go back to your husband before it's too late for him to take you back, and give him a chance to explain! You'll go back to Tom to-night!

[*He goes determinedly to the sofa and gets her hat and cloak for her.*

BECKY. [*Takes her hat from him and puts it*

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on the centre-table with equal determination.] I shall sleep here, in this room, to-night!

ROLAND. You'll sleep in a Pullman car and wake up to-morrow, happy and in your right senses, in Jersey City.

BECKY. [*Moves back from him a little.*] You can't turn me out!

[*A pause.* ROLAND *reads the real trouble in her face and becomes serious and sympathetic.*

ROLAND. Becky, you don't really believe what you say about Tom? [*She lowers her head in assent.*] You *know?* [*She lowers her head again.*] There must be a mistake somewhere! [*Puts the cloak on the Morris chair.*] If I ever knew a man who loved his wife! Go back, Becky!

BECKY. It's impossible!

ROLAND. [*Going to her.*] I speak to you with

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years of bitter experience behind me, and it's only what good there is left in me which is urging me to say this to you. I know in the end that you'll be nearer happiness than you ever can be any other way. Go back to Tom.

BECKY. No, no, I tell you, father, I've left Tom for good! Keep me with you —

[*A knock on the door.*

ROLAND. Come in!

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes in Left and* BECKY *sinks down into the Morris chair.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Worried.*] It's getting pretty late! I didn't know as Mis' Warder knew the street car don't run past here after twelve thirty.

ROLAND. That's all right. Mrs. Warder is taking the one o'clock train to New York. We'll catch the last car.

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MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Relieved, smiles.*] Oh, well, then, you've got plenty of time. I'd better let you have my latch-key, though. I'll leave it on the hall table. [*To* BECKY.] Would you like anything? A glass of raspberry vinegar and a piece of jell cake?

BECKY. No, thanks.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Offended.*] Good evening.

BECKY. Good evening.

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *goes out.*

Why did you say I was going? I'm not!

ROLAND. You are. If you love Tom, you'll go. [*He goes to her and puts his arm around her shoulder.*] Do you love Tom still?

BECKY. Yes, father.

ROLAND. Then go back, Becky!

BECKY. ~~No.~~

ROLAND. Your religion teaches you that the

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greatest love always carries with it the power of forgiveness.

BECKY. [*Eagerly.*] Oh, it's what I want to believe. If it's only true — if it's only true of *us!*

ROLAND. You've got to *make* it true by going back! [*He moves away.*] Good God! you shan't repeat your mother's and my mistake and make a miserable failure of both your lives!

[BECKY *looks up surprised.*

BECKY. What mistake?

ROLAND. [*Quietly, ashamed.*] Your mother left me, just as you want to leave Tom.

BECKY. Mother — [*Rises.*] left you?

ROLAND. And for the same reason, do you understand me — that you want to leave Tom.

BECKY. But you never told me!

ROLAND. No.

BECKY. How long before she died?

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ROLAND. A year.

BECKY. And how long were you and mother happy together?

ROLAND. A few months — not many.

BECKY. Tom and I have been blissfully happy for six years!

ROLAND. That's an argument for me! Go back!

BECKY. What a lot of lies you've always told me about yourself and mother, — all my life! You always said you were an ideal couple and that it was sorrow over her death that made you what you are!

ROLAND. I was ashamed when you found me out — I wanted some excuse to try and keep your sympathy and affection. Besides, what good would it have done to have told you the truth?

[*He crosses to the table Left, and taking up a*

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photograph of his wife, stands looking at it.

BECKY. If you had always told me the truth about everything, I think it would have saved me this night. I've about decided that the truth in everything is the best for everything in the end — if one could only learn to tell it.

ROLAND. You must begin young and you didn't.

BECKY. By whose fault? [ROLAND *turns away from her, feeling the sting.*] Tell me now about you and mother.

[*She sits again in the Morris chair.*

ROLAND. [*By the centre-table.*] Well, your mother accused me as you do Tom. But it wasn't true of me, Becky! it wasn't true — then.

BECKY. I'm afraid I don't believe you, father.

ROLAND. You don't believe me when, even

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now, after all these years, I tell you it wasn't true?

BECKY. No. I want to believe you, father, but I can't! You've just admitted you've lied to me all my life about you and mother! Why should I believe you would suddenly turn around and tell me the truth now?

ROLAND. At last, one trait in you like your mother! Do all that I could, swear by everything she or I held holy, I couldn't persuade her I was telling the truth!

BECKY. Perhaps you had already destroyed her confidence in you! You can do that, even with some one who loves you, in a day, in an hour, in even less!

ROLAND. It did look ugly against me, and your mother was already disappointed in me. I couldn't live up to her standard. [*He smiles.*]

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I was sort of good-looking, ~~when she married me,~~ ~~too foppish~~, perhaps, — and I rode my own horses, generally to win, too, — and what part of my income I didn't make on the race-track I made with the ace and right bower! I promised your mother to give up the gambling side of it — but I couldn't, it was in my blood; I tried, Becky, but I failed. I lied to her about it and she found me out and began to distrust me. She was a crank on the subject of lying, anyway. One of those straightforward, narrow-minded, New England women who think everything that isn't the truth is a lie! I always hated the plain truth. I liked to trim it up a little.

BECKY. [*With a nervous, pathetic little laugh.*] Like me!

ROLAND. Yes. I remember how we used to laugh at you as a child! Almost the first words

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you spoke were fibs, and gad, the fairy stories you used to tell about yourself!

[*Goes up to table.*

BECKY. Yes. Do you remember the time, father, after I'd been reading Grimm's Fairy Tales about the wicked step-parents, how I told all over Baltimore you were my stepfather and beat me? It made me a real heroine, to the other children, and I loved it! And you found it out, and gave me my choice of being punished or promising never to tell another story! Do you remember?

ROLAND. [*Sits on the arm of the chair and puts his arm about her.*] I could never bear to punish you!

BECKY. I always made up stories about everything. I didn't see any harm — *then* —

ROLAND. Well, your mother said I'd proved

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I couldn't tell the truth! She didn't often use plain and ugly words, but she called me a liar, and I've never heard the word since without hearing her voice and seeing her face as she said it!

BECKY. You loved her! Oh, I know how it must have hurt!

ROLAND. She wouldn't believe me, she wouldn't forgive, and she left me! I don't blame her; it was my own fault at bottom! But it's true as land and water, Becky, as true as you're my daughter, God help you, and that I've loved you in my useless, selfish old way, I *was true to your mother.* I loved her, and no other woman existed for me then. I was willing to own up I had broken my word and was a gambler! I was willing to own up I was a liar, even, and perhaps I deserved all I got, but I loved your mother,

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and when she went back on me and believed the one thing about me that wasn't true, I gritted my teeth like a damn fool and said, "To hell with women and to the dogs for me!"

BECKY. And it wasn't true! Father! I believe you, it wasn't true!

ROLAND. No, but it was true enough soon after! I kept my word to myself and gave her plenty of reasons not to love me afterwards — and that was the beginning of the end of me.

BECKY. But if you'd only waited, if you'd only given her a chance, wouldn't she have realized?

ROLAND. [*Going to her, puts his hand on her shoulder.*] Yes, and that's why you must go back to Tom to-night. Do you want to repeat your mother's and my story? Go back, Becky!

BECKY. I can't.

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ROLAND. Well, I can tell you what Tom'll do if you put off going back to him till it's too late. He'll let you go, and help you to divorce him, so he can marry some other woman, your opposite, and be happy the rest of his life.

BECKY. Father!

[BECKY *shows a new element, jealousy, added to her trouble.*

ROLAND. Or else he'll grow hard and bitter about all women, and the gold years of a man's life will be brass in his mouth — thanks to you!

BECKY. Yes, and I'll live here with you and grow dowdy and slattern, till I'm slovenly all through — body and soul! I won't care how I look or what company I keep in place of the friends who will surely drop me. I'll take up your life here, and my face'll grow flabby and my

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heart dry and my spirit fogged, and I'll have nobody to thank for the dead end but myself!

ROLAND. But I won't have it! You've got to go back to Tom to-night! You were happy enough with him this afternoon! He's been a wonderful husband to you and I know the run of them! I don't blame him for not wanting me around, — a father-in-law who was a disgrace to his wife. He did right to keep me here where I'm an old story and nobody cares. I'll own up to this now that you want to turn your back on him. But you shan't do it! You shan't break up his home with a beastly scandal and spoil your whole life and perhaps his, all in one hysterical hour! Listen! [*He goes to her and places his two hands on her shoulders.*] It's true that no one was to blame for what I've sunk to but myself. Still, it's also true that in the be-

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ginning, perhaps, a great deal of patience, and more forgiveness, might have made both your mother's life and mine a little more worth living!

[*He turns aside, surprised by a welling up of an almost forgotten emotion.*

BECKY. You don't dream how every word you say cuts and saws into me! But I can't go back!

ROLAND. You will. For if it comes down to this point, I won't keep you here!

BECKY. But I can't go to a hotel! I haven't any money.

ROLAND. I have enough for your ticket, and I'll take you to the station and send a telegram to Tom to expect you in the morning.

BECKY. No, I can't — I can't.

ROLAND. [*Sternly.*] You've *got to!* You can't stay here and I won't give you a cent to stay anywhere else!

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BECKY. You wouldn't turn me out into the streets!

ROLAND. Yes, I will, if I must to force you to go back to your husband.

[*He gets her cloak.*

BECKY. [*Rises, desperate.*] Father!

ROLAND. [*Struck by her tone, pauses.*] Well?

BECKY. [*Drops her head and with a great effort speaks, her voice sinking almost to a whisper.*] I haven't left Tom — it's Tom's left me —

[*A pause.* ROLAND *stands looking at her and her cloak drops from his hand, as he slowly takes in what she means.*

ROLAND. What do you say?

BECKY. Tom has left me — now you know why I can't go back.

ROLAND. What for?

BECKY. He called me what mother called you.

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He's lost confidence in me. He believes — there's some one else.

[*The last in agony of shame and grief.*

ROLAND. No wonder you made me worm out the truth! I wouldn't have believed it of you, Becky! I wouldn't have believed it of you!

BECKY. [*Frightened.*] But it isn't true, father!

ROLAND. Why didn't you tell me the right story in the beginning?

BECKY. [*Aghast.*] Father! don't you believe me?

ROLAND. You denied it to him, I suppose?

BECKY. Of course.

ROLAND. And he turned you out all the same?

BECKY. He didn't turn me out; he only refused to stay in the house with me. I came away!

ROLAND. Well, if your husband doesn't believe in you, how can you expect me to, who've

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known all your life you couldn't tell the truth?

BECKY. Father, I've told you the truth now! For God's sake, believe me, for if *you* won't believe me either, what will become of me?

ROLAND. I can help you better if you'll be honest with me. A man like Tom Warder isn't putting the wife he's been a slave to out of his life without good reason.

[*He turns away from her.*

BECKY. You said you knew the look in my face when I lied, because it was your look. [*Goes to him and stands close, facing him.*] Look in my face now and tell me what you see there. [*She speaks very simply and clearly.*] I love Tom and only Tom and never have loved any other man and have never been anything but faithful and true in my love for him. [ROLAND *stands*

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silently looking into her face, still unconvinced.] I stand with Tom exactly, father, where you stood the day mother left you —

[*His face begins to change. A knock on the door Left.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Outside.*] If Mis' Warder wants to catch that train, I hear the car coming!

BECKY. [*Breathlessly seizing hold of him with her two hands.*] Father!

ROLAND. Mrs. Warder's changed her mind. She's stopping here to-night.

[*Putting his arms about her.*

BECKY. Father!

[*Her tension gives way, and she lies limp in his arms, her slender body shaking with the emotion which now masters her as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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ACT IV

Mr. Roland's rooms in Mrs. Crespigny's flat, the following Monday.

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ACT IV

MR. ROLAND'S *rooms in* MRS. CRESPIGNY'S *flat, the following Monday. The sun pours in through the bow-window; folded bedclothes and a pillow are placed neatly on one end of the sofa.* BECKY *and* ROLAND *are having coffee together at the centre-table. The cloth is soiled, other things in the room are in disorder, and everything is decidedly unappetizing.* ROLAND *is wearing a slovenly bathrobe; a newspaper is propped against the coffee pot before him.*

BECKY. How horrid and messy everything is!

ROLAND. [*Who is smoking a cigarette as he*

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eats.] Oh, you'll get used to it. Before you know it you'll like things best this way.

BECKY. Not if I can help it. I shall fight against it.

ROLAND. You think so now; you've only had one day at it.

BECKY. To begin with, my dear father, you mustn't come to breakfast with me in that disgusting bathrobe.

ROLAND. If you imagine for a minute I'm going to let you come here and upset everything to rob me of my comfort, you'll have your hands full.

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *is heard playing a piano in a farther room through most of the scene. Her repertoire is varied, and consists of an old waltz, a coon song, the "Melody in F," and "Waiting at the Church."*

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BECKY. [*With an effort at a smile.*] It will be another fight then, father, such as we used to have. Only this time I'm stronger by six years' life with a splendid character, which will help me bring you and myself up to Tom's level, rather than go down with you to this.

ROLAND. [*To change the subject.*] Have you written Tom?

BECKY. [*Sighing.*] A hundred letters, I should think.

ROLAND. And no answer?

BECKY. No, there isn't time.

ROLAND. Yes, he could telegraph.

BECKY. But I didn't send any of the letters.

ROLAND. [*Looking up from his newspaper.*] You aren't eating anything.

BECKY. [*Rising in disgust, goes and sits in Morris chair.*] Father, we can't live here, can we?

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You must tell Mrs. Crespigny, and I'll find a little flat, just for us two —

ROLAND. [*Irritably.*] I knew it would come to that! Not satisfied with upsetting Warder's existence and your own, you've got to come here and upset mine! No, sir! I'll marry Mrs. C. before I'll leave here.

BECKY. That's a threat I know you won't carry out. I've had two long, long nights to think things over. I wish I could die, but I know one can't die when one wants to. I know sorrow, however heartbreaking, doesn't kill, — and I'm so horribly healthy I'll probably live forever. I may even have to stand aside and see Tom happy with some one else. Well, all the same I mean to live exactly as I would if I were still with Tom. I'm going to live as if every day, every hour, I was expecting him back. I'm

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going to live so that if he ever should come back to me — I will be ready to go home with him.

[*The music stops for a moment.*

ROLAND. That's all very well for you, but I don't see why I should have to live a life to please Tom — just so you can leave me in the lurch when he comes back after you. The odds are pretty strong against his wanting me to go home with him too! I've never ridden yet according to his rules, and I don't intend to begin now.

[*Goes to far table in the bow-window and takes a fresh cigarette and changes his paper for another.*

BECKY. [*Rising, takes the bedclothes from the sofa.*] Don't forget, father, what little money we have is mine, so you'll have to live as I wish. And in the end I believe you'll thank me.

[*She goes into the bedroom.*

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ROLAND. But in the beginning I'll damn you, and in the end too! I'm too old a leopard to change my spots.

[*He makes himself comfortable in the Morris chair.*

BECKY. [*Coming out of the bedroom.*] I'm going to try just as hard as I can not to tell even little lies, no matter how small, just to see if I can't get into the habit of always telling the truth. Because he might come back, father, don't you think so? Don't you think maybe he'll come back?

ROLAND. I'm doing my best to make him.

BECKY. [*Surprised and eager.*] How?

ROLAND. Never mind how. I'll tell you if it works.

BECKY. [*Piling the breakfast dishes on the tray.*] I hoped he'd answer the note I sent by

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Jenks, but he didn't. No; when Tom says a thing, he means it. I'm going out for a little while.

[*She places the tray on the table Left.*

ROLAND. Where?

BECKY. There's a small empty flat two doors below here; I'm going to look it over. I think it may do for us.

[*She goes into the bedroom.*

ROLAND. Don't be gone long, because I might need you.

BECKY. [*In the bedroom.*] For what?

ROLAND. To help receive Tom!

BECKY. [*Coming out quickly.*] Father!

ROLAND. Don't get your expectations too high, but I telegraphed him yesterday to come here.

[*The piano is heard again, but stops during* BECKY'S *long speech.*

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BECKY. If he wouldn't come for me, he wouldn't come because you asked him.

ROLAND. I feel if only you could get face to face with him, Becky, especially now when he's had time to think things over, to realize calmly, away from the heat of anger, that whatever your faults might be —

BECKY. [*Interrupts eagerly, going toward him.*] Yes, yes —

ROLAND. Lack of love for him and faithlessness couldn't be among them.

BECKY. Yes, if I could see him! [*She kneels on the floor beside him, her arms on the arm of the chair.*] I feel that if there's left in the bottom of his heart — no matter how deep down — just a little love for me, if it's only the memory of what he once had, wouldn't my own love be some sort of a magnet to bring his back? If I could

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sit and talk to him, hold his hand, go back over our life a little, couldn't I make him see that I loved him — and only him, that what I'd done had been foolish — wrong not to do as he wished — but only *that* wrong — and that I've learned something by this terrible lesson? And if I promised to try with all my might and main not to lie any more, if I promised I wouldn't be discouraged with failure if he wouldn't be, but would keep on trying, wouldn't he on his side try to have a little confidence again? Wouldn't he let me come back into his life just for that trial anyway? . . .

ROLAND. I think so. A man like Warder can't get over loving a woman all in a moment, especially if he finds out before it's too late he's misjudged her. Wrong as you may have been, we know you're not so wrong as he thinks.

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BECKY. But he won't come. You see you haven't heard from him — he won't come.

[*She goes up to the bow-window and looks out.*

ROLAND. I'm a little worried myself. I told him to telegraph and said it was urgent.

BECKY. How — urgent?

ROLAND. Well, my dear, as you say, if I had simply said, "Come and see Becky," of course he wouldn't have paid any attention. I had to make the telegram so he would come.

BECKY. Yes, but how did you?

ROLAND. It was a stroke of genius! I said, "Becky is dying. Come at once!"

BECKY. [*Going to the sofa and sitting on it.*] But I'm not dying. He'll find out as soon as he gets here.

ROLAND. No, he mustn't. My idea was that he would think you had tried to kill yourself —

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don't you see? It would rouse his sympathies — perhaps some remorse — and he would hurry on.

[*Dropping the paper carelessly on the floor, he rises.*

BECKY. But he hasn't!

ROLAND. He couldn't get here till this morning; still, I ought to have had an answer to the telegram.

[*He goes into the bedroom.*

BECKY. [*Rises and goes toward the opening.*] And if he should come?

ROLAND. [*Coming out of the bedroom in his shirt-sleeves, without the bathrobe.*] Well, you must be careful not to give me away till you are solid with him again. You must be weak and ill — just getting over it — the doctor's saved you! Anyway, I thought that might bring him.

BECKY. I don't like it.

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ROLAND. [*Going back into the bedroom offended.*] I did my best!

BECKY. But it seems to me as if I would be telling Tom a lie again.

ROLAND. Not at all. I'm telling it. And besides, doesn't the end justify the means?

BECKY. I think Tom'd call it a lie. I don't want to do it!

ROLAND. Well, if he comes in answer to my telegram, you've *got* to do it!

BECKY. No, father, I won't!

ROLAND. Nonsense! You can't get out of it. And, good Heavens, why should you, if it's going to give you back what you want and prevent a terrible upheaval?

[*The piano is heard again.*

BECKY. Well, anyway, he hasn't answered, so perhaps he won't come. I'm going out.

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[*Gets her hat from table Left.*

ROLAND. Don't be long in any case. He might have forgot to send word, or not have time, or even have suspected something and not answered purposely, and be coming all the same on this morning's train!

BECKY. [*Putting on her hat.*] I'll see the flat and come straight back. [*She starts to go, stops and turns in the doorway.*] Thank you, father, for trying to help me. If he only *will* come!

[*She goes out Left.*

ROLAND. [*Lighting another cigarette.*] Move into another flat! To live with everything so filthy clean you can't be easy and let things go! Ta, ta to the bucket-shop, and never a cent to put on anything again! Nothing but cleanth and economy! No, no, Stephen Roland, not at your age. [*He stands gazing at a portrait of* MRS. CRES-

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PIGNY *on the Right wall, with a half-humorous expression of resignation, then crosses to the electric bell on the Left wall.*] Listen, don't you hear wedding bells? [*He rings the bell.*] Do you hear them, Stephen! [*He rings again. The piano off stage stops.*] Wedding bells! [*He turns and walks toward the portrait again, nodding his head definitely. A knock on the door Left.*] Come in — *Jennie!*

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes in.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Did you ring?

ROLAND. I believe I did.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. What's the matter? My piano-playing disturb Mis' Warder?

ROLAND. Oh, — is the pianola mended?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes. The man said I worked the pedals too emotionally.

ROLAND. I wanted to see you.

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MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Pulling her belt down and her marcel wave out.*] Well, I'm visible!

ROLAND. Mrs. Crespigny, I'm in trouble.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going to him.*] Now look here, Mr. Roland, true as Gospel I can't let you have another cent, not before the first of the month. Your daughter's here now; you've got to go to her.

ROLAND. Not so fast, please! It isn't money. At least that isn't this moment's trouble. My daughter and her husband have quarrelled.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I suspected something was wrong. [*She starts, aghast and angry at a new idea which comes to her.*] *She don't mean to come here and live?*

ROLAND. No, she wants to take me away to live with her.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Didn't I always tell you

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she'd separate us if she could! Now show your character! I guess you're your own boss, ain't you? You won't go, Mr. Roland?

ROLAND. But you see if they don't make up their quarrel, my allowance stops and I won't have a cent. I'll have to live where my daughter wants me.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Taking from the bosom of her shirt-waist a second-hand natural rose with a wired stem, and destitute of green leaves, she twists the wired part nervously about.*] Why ain't one woman's money just as good as another's for you to live on?

ROLAND. Mrs. Crespigny, you've come straight to the point, and you've come pretty bluntly, but that's just as well in view of the poor figure I cut in the matter.

[*He turns up toward the centre-table and places*

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on it his newspaper, which he has picked up from the floor.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Why, I think, considering your age, your figger's great!

ROLAND. [*Looking at her despairingly.*] I spoke figuratively! Now I'm doing my best to bring about a reconciliation. Of course, if I succeed, I can keep on living here just as usual — I'll have my allowance.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. But if you don't bring about the reconciliation? . . .

ROLAND. Well, in that case, frankly, I should have to leave you or marry you!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going to the table.*] Look here, Mr. Roland, I want this in black and white! Are you proposing to me?

ROLAND. Well, Mrs. Crespigny, in a way —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. But there's a string to it?

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ROLAND. You know you have once or twice delicately suggested that a marriage wouldn't be altogether disagreeable to you, but it's a poor bargain for you, and in case the proposal should ever be definitely made, I want to be sure you know what you're getting!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I guess I know well enough. I ain't lived in the same flat with you for four solid years without finding out whether or not you was worth it *to me.* I know your faults, Mr. Roland, but they're swell faults.

ROLAND. [*He goes to the table in the window to get a cigarette.*] Mrs. Crespigny, suppose you keep to the point, which is, if I marry — if you marry me, you do it with your eyes open. I'm to have all the liberty I've ever had. None of my habits are to be interfered with, none of my ways of spending money.

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MRS. CRESPIGNY. All right. I know I won't be marrying a hero, but I'll be getting a high-toned name and the company I want for keeps, for if once we're married, your daughter nor nobody else won't sneak you away from me, and you can't get nothing in this world for nothing.

[*She sits Right of the table with a lugubrious expression on her poor powdered face.*

ROLAND. Very well, then, [*Coming down to her.*] if there's no reconciliation to-day, we'll consider it settled without another word.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. And if she does make it up with her husband?

ROLAND. We'll let that stand for the present. I would still have my allowance and I wouldn't have to leave the flat.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Then, so far as I'm concerned,

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— and I don't make no bones about saying it, — I'd rather they kep' separate.

ROLAND. Don't be selfish! I think you'll win without that. [*He lifts her head tenderly, smiling sweetly; then, as he turns away from her the sweetness fades, and he looks at least twenty years older.* MRS. CRESPIGNY, *happy but embarrassed, tears the faded rose to pieces petal by petal.*] I don't understand it. I ought to have had a telegram long ago!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Starts and rises.*] A telegram! My stars! this telegram came before you was up and I forgot all about it.

[*Giving him a telegram.*

ROLAND. That won't do! You'll have to be more thoughtful than that! [*Reading the telegram.*] He's coming! He's due here any minute!

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And Beck out! Quick! help me make this look like a sick room.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. A sick room?

ROLAND. I'll put this chair here for Becky to sit in!

[*Moving the Morris chair near to the table.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. And I'll put a towel on the table. [*Getting one from the bedroom.*] But why a sick room, Mr. Roland! Who's sick?

ROLAND. That's how I got him here. Telegraphed Becky was dying — and it's worked — he's coming!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You ought to have some bottles for medicine!

ROLAND. Bottles? Here's a couple!

[*Getting a whiskey bottle and a brandy bottle from the sideboard.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Taking the bottles from*

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him.] You don't want him to think she's been on a spree, do you? [*She puts them on the table Left.*] Put a glass of water on the table. [*He gets a glass from the sideboard.*] And I'll put this saucer and spoon on top — that'll look like homeopathic stuff. [*She places a saucer on the table and breathes on the spoon and polishes it on a corner of table-cloth.* ROLAND *gets a pillow and a blanket from the bedroom and arranges them in the Morris chair.*] Do you know what we ought to have on that table? An orange on a plate! I don't know why it is, but it always looks like sick folks, having an orange on a plate by 'em! Wait a minute. I've got a marble orange just like real. I'll get it. I'll take the tray. [MRS. CRESPIGNY *with the tray at the door Left.*] Josephine! Josephine! Oh, never mind if your hands are in the suds! [ROLAND *gets a hassock, which he places in front of*

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the Morris chair. He pulls down the window-shades, takes the siphon, and fills the glass on the table, putting the saucer and spoon on top of it. MRS. CRESPIGNY *enters with an imitation orange on a plate.*] Here it is! And I brought a knife with it — don't it look natural?

[*The front bell rings.*

ROLAND. Becky!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. No — I let her take the key!

ROLAND. Maybe it's he! And Becky not back! Don't let Josephine open the door yet!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Opens the Left door and calls.*] Josephine! Josy! I'll tend door; you go on with your washing!

[*She shuts the door.*

ROLAND. Show him here —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Huh, huh?

ROLAND. And I'll tell him the doctor's with Becky —

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MRS. CRESPIGNY. Huh, huh?

ROLAND. Then you watch for her, and when she comes, knock on the door and tell me the doctor's gone —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Doubtfully.*] Huh, huh —

ROLAND. Then I'll go "to find out if she feels able to see him," and bring her in as if from her bedroom.

[*He goes to the Morris chair and arranges the pillow and blanket.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. It's lucky I don't have to tell him all that! You know, I haven't got your *— imagination!* . . .

ROLAND. That's all right — you'll see, — they'll be reconciled!

[*Gets a fan from behind the book-rack on the back wall and puts it on the table.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Reconciled!

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ROLAND. Yes, yes, they'll be reconciled!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. *Our* marriage is as good as off then!

ROLAND. Yes, yes — I mean we'll see! [*The front bell rings again.*] Don't keep him waiting — he might get suspicious!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Turning the matter over in her mind, speaks very abstractedly.*] Our marriage is as good as off then!

[*She goes out slowly, weighing this sudden complication in her affairs.*

ROLAND. Well, you never know your luck! No, no, don't close the door! I'll be here, expecting him.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Off stage.*] How do you do? Won't you come right in?

[WARDER *enters.*

ROLAND. So you've come, Tom?

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WARDER. [*Very serious.*] How is she, father?

ROLAND. The doctor is with her now. Mrs. Crespigny will let me know when he's gone. I haven't let her know I telegraphed you.

WARDER. But will she get well? Is she no worse?

ROLAND. We have every hope of her getting well.

WARDER. [*He turns aside to control a sudden flood of emotion.*] Thank God!

ROLAND. I think a good deal now depends upon you. [WARDER *faces* ROLAND. ROLAND *goes to him.*] Are you ready to take my daughter back?

WARDER. [*Very quietly, soberly.*] Yes.

ROLAND. For good?

WARDER. If I can only feel sure Becky will try — only *try* — to be straightforward and honest

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with me, that's all I ask. God knows what I've suffered these two days, and when your message came — oh, to have that on my shoulders too — it would have been more than a man could bear!

ROLAND. Whatever Becky's faults may have been, you did her one terrible injustice!

WARDER. Yes, I know that now! Becky, — never! Father, hour after hour since the one in which I left her, I've paced up and down my room, or sat and gritted my teeth in the train, and thought — and thought — and *thought* — till the anger died out of me and I began to see things white and clear both ahead and behind me. And all the time Becky's final words kept ringing in my ears, and they rang *true:* "I love you, and only you, and you always." . . . And the further away from the excitement and anger I got, the saner I grew. And as I passed over our life to-

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gether, second by second of happiness, I found only proof after proof of her love for me! Yes, I did Becky one great injustice, and I want to ask her to forgive me.

ROLAND. [*His better self moved. Takes* TOM'S *hand.*] Tom —

WARDER. After all, life is made up of compromises and concessions, and if Becky will only try, and let me help her —

ROLAND. I believe you love her still?

WARDER. I can only answer you by saying that I want more than anything else in the world to believe in her again — to have at least the beginning of confidence.

[*With a knock on the door,* MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes in, frightened at what she is going to do.* ROLAND *hesitates one moment, but his old habit soon reasserts itself.*

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ROLAND. The doctor gone? [MRS. CRESPIGNY *nods her head.*] Excuse me.

[*He hurries out Left.* MRS. CRESPIGNY *stands looking after* ROLAND, *evidently trying to nerve herself up to the task of telling* WARDER *the truth. She makes several ineffectual gasping efforts to speak, and finally gets started, rushing her words and not daring to speak slowly for fear she'd stop.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I'm going to do something awful, and I only hope I won't be punished for it all the rest of my life. Lord knows, seems as if I'd been punished enough in advance. Can I trust you?

WARDER. In what way?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. As a gentleman. If I tell you something — something that you ought to

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know — will you promise to see it through and not let on I told you?

WARDER. I don't know if I can promise that. Is it anything you have a right to tell me?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going toward him.*] It won't do you no harm to pertect me, and I give you my sacred word of honor it's the truth instead of the lie you've been told! And all I ask is that you'll pertect me as regards Mr. Roland.

WARDER. [*Astounded, bewildered, but his suspicions rearroused.*] What lie? Go on. I give you the promise!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Whispers.*] She ain't sick!

WARDER. Who?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Mis' Warder! She ain't been sick — that was all a story to get you here!

WARDER. [*Catching her two hands by the wrists*

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and holding them tight, so she can't get away from him.] No! don't say that!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Ssh! I will say it! It's true! The doctor wasn't here when you came! Mis' Warder was out and only came in when I knocked on the door just now!

WARDER. Do you realize what you're saying?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Perfeckly!

WARDER. And you're telling me the truth?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Keep your eyes open and judge for yourself, that's all! Maybe you think *that's* the truth!

[*Snatching up the imitation orange from the table, she smashes it on the floor.* WARDER *moves to go; she stands in front of the door to stop him.*

WARDER. Let me go! I won't stay for this brutal farce!

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MRS. CRESPIGNY. You promised to pertect me, and if you go now Mr. Roland'll catch on, and I want him to marry me! Now you know —

WARDER. Was this his idea or hers?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. His, and she —

[*Listens.*

WARDER. [*Eagerly.*] She what —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Moving away from the door.*] Ssh! they're here!

[WARDER *controls himself and goes to the other side of the room.* ROLAND *comes, bringing* BECKY, *who leans on him. Her eyes are down.* WARDER *stands immovable and watches.*

ROLAND. [*Pointedly.*] Thank you, Mrs. Crespigny.

[*She goes out unwillingly.* BECKY *looks up and sees* WARDER. *He stands motionless, watching her.*

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BECKY. [*As she meets* WARDER'S *eyes, breaks away from* ROLAND.] No, father! I can't do it! I won't do it!

ROLAND. [*Frightened.*] Becky!

BECKY. No! I tell you it's only another lie and a revolting one!

ROLAND. You're ill! You don't know what you're saying!

BECKY. No, I'm not ill, and you know it, and I haven't been! And if I can't win his love back by the truth, I'll never be able to keep it, so what's the use of getting it back at all?

[*The tears fill her eyes and her throat.*

WARDER. Becky!

[*He wants to go to her, but still holds himself back. His face shows his joy, but neither* BECKY *nor* ROLAND *see this.*

BECKY. [*Continues after a moment, pathetically.*]

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I thought I might creep back, through pity, first into your life; and then into your heart again. But, after all, I can't do it. [*She sits in the Morris chair, hopelessly.*] Something's happened to me in these two days — even if I tell lies, I've learned to loathe them and be afraid of them, and all the rest of my life I'll try —

WARDER. [*In a choked voice.*] Thank God!

[*He goes to her, almost in tears himself.* ROLAND *looks at* WARDER, *and realizes what it means; a smile comes over his own face, and at the same time his eyes fill with his almost-forgotten tears.*

BECKY. You can't forgive me!

WARDER. We don't love people because they are perfect.

[*He takes her two trembling hands in his, and she rises.*

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BECKY. Tom!

WARDER. We love them because they are themselves.

[*And he takes her in his arms close to him, as the final*

CURTAIN FALLS

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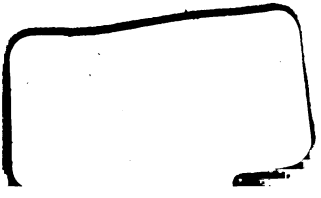

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